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Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 2367 (2017)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2367 (2017), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my previous report, which was issued on 17 January 2018 (S/2018/42), and the briefing of my Special Representative for Iraq to the Security Council on 20 February 2018.

II. Summary of key political developments

A. Political situation

2. During the reporting period, preparations for the upcoming Council of Representatives (the parliament) elections, discussions over the federal budget and the rapprochement between Baghdad and Erbil dominated the political agenda. On 21 January, the Federal Supreme Court issued a decision stating that parliamentary elections must be held 45 days before the conclusion of the preceding electoral term, in conformity with article 56 (2) of the Constitution of Iraq. Following this ruling, on 22 January, the Council of Representatives endorsed a previous decision of the Council of Ministers to hold the parliamentary elections on 12 May. This decision was subsequently ratified by the President, Fuad Masum.

3. During the same session, the Council of Representatives voted on several amendments to the Council of Representatives Election Law (45/2013). These amendments stipulate that the Government should ensure a safe environment for holding the elections, facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin and enable them to vote for their constituency of origin, regardless of their location of displacement. The Ministries of Defence and the Interior should ensure security during the elections. Political parties contesting the elections should not have armed elements under their control. A special voting process would be undertaken for members of the Iraqi security forces.

4. The Council of Representatives also amended eligibility criteria for candidates, introducing the requirement that candidates should hold a bachelor's degree, excepting 20 per cent of candidates of each political entity, who may hold a high

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school certificate or equivalent. One additional seat was allocated to the Faili Kurdish component in Wassit Governorate, increasing the total number of parliamentary seats from 328 to 329.

5. In his weekly press conferences on 20 and 27 February, the Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, indicated that the Council of Ministers had agreed on measures to facilitate the return of displaced persons and to ensure that the elections were held in a secure environment and in a transparent manner. On 27 February, the Council of Ministers established a ministerial committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of these measures, comprised of the Minister of Defence, Irfan al-Hayali; the Minister of Higher Education, Faryad Rawandozi; the Minister of Culture, Abdul Razzaq al-Issa; and the Minister of Water Resources, Hassan al-Janabi.

6. On 20 February, Mr. Al-Abadi requested the international community to send election observers in order to promote the integrity of the process. On 28 February, the Independent High Electoral Commission announced that the election campaigning period would start on 10 April and last until the day before the elections.

7. On 27 February, the Council of Ministers determined that the Provincial Council elections would be held on 22 December 2018. The Parliament has approved the decision, which has yet to be ratified by the President. On 3 March, members of parliament from Kirkuk reached a breakthrough agreement on amendments to the Law on Provincial and District Council Elections (Law No. 36 of 2008, as amended), which was subsequently adopted by the Parliament. Kirkuk will now be able to participate in provincial elections for the first time since 2005. UNAMI offered its good offices and intensive facilitation throughout the drafting of the amendments to the Law.

8. At the same time, the Kirkuk Provincial Council remained inoperative and no formal meetings were convened. Individual Council members, as well as other interlocutors, repeatedly shared with UNAMI their concern that the failure of the Provincial Council to reconvene had a negative effect on both governance and security. Notably, tensions flared over returns of Sunni Arabs to the Dibis and Daquq districts of the Governorate. This also revived land disputes, with a number of plaintiffs seeking to settle them in court.

9. On 3 March, the Council of Representatives adopted the 2018 Federal Budget Law, with 187 out of 328 members of parliament attending. Mr. Al-Abadi subsequently congratulated the Iraqi people on the adoption of the budget law, which will enter into force retroactively from 1 January 2018. All Kurdish parliamentary blocs boycotted the vote, owing mainly to dissatisfaction over the size of the Kurdistan Region budget share and the sovereign (federal) expenditures. In the budget, total revenue is estimated at $77.5 billion and expenditure at $88 billion. The planned deficit is about $7.5 billion lower than last year. Many measures are introduced in the budget to curb operational expenditures and increase non-oil revenues, including sales taxes, and fees for public utilities such as water and electricity. Although the President, citing a number of legal, financial and formal irregularities, returned the budget for revisions to the Council of Representatives, the Speaker, Salim al-Jubouri, maintained on 14 March that the budget had been adopted in line with the Constitution. He explained that those who objected to the provisions of the budget law could file a complaint with the Federal Supreme Court, but had no right under the Constitution to reject the law. On 29 March, the President, Fuad Masum, instructed his office to complete the necessary procedures to publish the budget law in the Official Gazette. Mr. Masum asserted that his decision to endorse the budget law was in the interest of the public, to protect civil rights and the international commitments of Iraq, and to facilitate the work of state institutions across the country.

10. On 5 March, the Council of Representatives adopted the law on the Iraqi National Oil Company Law, which established a fully State-owned company directly linked to the Council of Ministers. The company aims to achieve a better utilization of oil and gas resources and will be active in the areas of exploration, development, production, marketing and related activities. A percentage, not exceeding 90 per cent, of the company's profits will flow into the national budget. The law annuls the Law Establishing the National Oil Company of 1967.

11. On 8 March, Mr. Al-Abadi issued a set of regulations to adjust the status of popular mobilization forces fighters, based on the Popular Mobilization Commission Law of November 2016. The regulations specify military ranks and minimum eligibility criteria, set salaries and allowances on a par with those applicable to Ministry of Defense staff and extend the scope of the Military Penal Law, the Civil Service Law, and a number of other laws to Popular Mobilization Commission employees.

12. A date for the next regional election in the Kurdistan Region has yet to be set, following the formal request of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, in December 2017. On 28 February, the Kurdistan Regional Parliament adopted a reform bill, focusing on civil servants' salaries and pensions. Prior to the ratification of the bill and following public demonstrations against it, the main parties backing the bill agreed to reopen it for revision, on 4 March. Discussions in the regional Parliament over possible amendments continue but, to date, remain inconclusive.

13. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan continued to discuss the convening of a party congress to elect its new leadership, after the death of its founder, Jalal Talabani, in October 2017. On 17 March, its leadership council convened in Sulaymaniyah to announce an interim party politburo. In preparation for the parliamentary elections of 12 May, the Movement for Change (Gorran), the Kurdistan Islamic Group and the Coalition for Democracy and Justice, led by the former Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Barham Saleh, formed an electoral alliance in the disputed areas. These three parties, as well as the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, are running on separate lists in the Kurdistan Region. The Kurdistan Democratic Party is boycotting the elections in Kirkuk. Shaswar Abdulwahid, a prominent Sulaymaniyah-based businessman who last year organized a "No for now" campaign prior to the referendum of 25 September, founded the New Generation Movement, which intends to field candidates for office countrywide.

B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

14. Discussions continued between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to address outstanding differences, notably the re-opening of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports to international traffic, as well as the allocation of federal funding for civil servants in the Kurdistan Region. Since January 2018, Mr. Al-Abadi and Mr. Barzani have met in Baghdad, Davos and Munich and maintained regular contacts through different channels to resolve their differences.

15. On 4 February, a joint committee of the federal and regional governments completed an initial audit of the number of civil servants in the Kurdistan Region ministries, with the exception of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. The secondary audit of the payroll of regional departments was completed for the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education; auditing of the remaining ministries continues. At the end of February, Mr. Al-Abadi reiterated his expectation that agreement over civil servant salaries would be reached soon. On 19 March, the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Finance and the Economy

announced that the federal Government had released 317 billion Iraqi dinars for the partial payment of Kurdistan Region civil servants. Subsequently, on 28 March, the Kurdistan Regional Government published a statement detailing amendments made to the civil servant salary saving system, which would not apply to civil servants earning less than 400,000 Iraqi dinars.

16. On 21 February, a spokesperson of the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs reported that agreement had been reached to resume flights between the Kurdistan Region and Saudi Arabia, exclusively for Umrah passengers, and, on 7 and 8 March, such flights operated from Erbil and Sulaymaniyah international airports. On 13 March, Mr. Al-Abadi issued an executive decree allowing the resumption of international flights to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports, placing them under the authority of the federal Government. On 19 March, international flights to both airports resumed.

17. The federal Government reiterated that it must maintain ultimate control over all exports of natural resources from Iraq, notably oil and gas. Negotiations continued over the use of the Kurdistan Region oil pipeline to export oil from Kirkuk governorate. On 27 February, Mr. Al-Abadi indicated that these negotiations included Turkey.

C. Security

18. Pockets of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) elements continued to carry out asymmetric attacks across the country. On 18 February, alleged ISIL fighters attacked a popular mobilization forces unit in Hawijah district, Kirkuk Governorate, killing a number of popular mobilization forces fighters. The following day, Iraqi federal police and the popular mobilization forces launched a security operation in the district, aiming at clearing the area of ISIL fighters. Mr. Al-Abadi ordered the opening of an investigation into the attack. On 11 March, a number of civilians, including a pregnant woman and two children, were killed at a disguised ISIL checkpoint along the Baghdad-Kirkuk road. A further five of these irregular checkpoints were set up along the road between 19 and 22 March, at which eight civilians and three militia members were killed. Seven other civilians and eight members of the Iraqi security forces who were abducted during the incidents concerned are still missing.

19. On 13 March, the commander of the 57th Brigade of the Iraqi Special Operations Forces was killed at a checkpoint near Samarra, Salah al-Din Governorate. Mr. Al-Abadi subsequently clarified that the commander had been shot by "undisciplined elements", adding that he had ordered an investigation. Local media reported shortly afterwards that six suspects had been arrested.

20. Armed opposition groups continued to be active in the Hamrin Mountains, on the border between Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates and in western Anbar Governorate. On 6 March, the Iraqi security forces announced the start of a clearance operation in the desert near the Iraqi-Jordanian border. On 24 March, clearance operations were launched in Diyala Governorate in response to increased activities by armed opposition groups south of the Hamrin Mountains, close to the border with Salah al-Din Governorate.

21. Baghdad continues to experience attacks with improvised explosive devices, including vehicle bombs, targeting the Iraqi security forces and civilians. A total of 52 such attacks occurred between 20 February and 25 March, killing 20 persons, including 17 civilians. To improve the security situation in Basra Governorate, the federal Government launched a law enforcement operation there on 21 February. The operation, expected to run for two months, is aimed at targeting criminals and disarm

tribes in the north of the Governorate. It has reportedly already resulted in the arrest of several individuals and the seizure of illegal weapons.

22. In a parallel development, Iraqi security forces entered Sinjar district in Ninawa Governorate, taking control over the area on 25 March, following reports that fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had withdrawn from the area. On 26 March, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Al-Abadi, and the Prime Minister of Turkey, Binali Yıldırım, discussed the situation in Sinjar by telephone. Mr. Yıldırım indicated that Turkey would not engage in military action in Sinjar without the approval of the Government of Iraq.

D. Regional and international developments

23. Following the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, generously hosted by Kuwait in Kuwait City, from 12 to 14 February, the Government of Iraq has continued to strengthen its relations with neighbouring countries and other international partners, on the basis of mutual political, economic and security interests.

24. From 16 to 18 February, Mr. Al-Abadi participated in the fifty-fourth Munich Security Conference. In his speech, he called on the world to unite against terrorism, highlighted the triumph of Iraq over ISIL and warned that remnants of ISIL were still active in the region. He vowed that Iraq would continue to enhance its relations with its neighbours on the basis of mutual interests and respect for national sovereignty. Mr. Al-Abadi expressed his appreciation for the support offered in Kuwait, which he interpreted as confidence in the Government of Iraq. In addition, he pledged to clamp down on corruption in a bid to restore investor confidence.

25. In the margins of the conference, the Prime Minister met, inter alios, the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel; the Prime Minister of France, Édouard Philippe; the Prime Minister of Turkey, Binali Yıldırım; the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul Gheit; the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, with whom he discussed the situation in Iraq and bilateral cooperation on security, trade and development.

26. The Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, also attended the Munich Security Conference and met, inter alios, the Federal Minister of Defence of Germany, Ursula von der Leyen, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, Angelino Alfano, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of Kuwait, Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Marie Eriksen Søreide, the Minister for Defence of Sweden, Peter Hultqvist, and the Minister of State for the Middle East of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Alistair Burt. In meetings, the delegation of the Kurdistan Region expressed strong willingness to peacefully resolve tensions with Baghdad and noted that the Constitution should be the basis for resolving all differences between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the federal Government.

27. On 18 February, the President, Mr. Masum, and the Vice-President, Nour al-Maliki, separately received the senior adviser for international affairs to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Ali Akbar Velayati, with whom they discussed bilateral relations. On 19 February, the Minister of the Interior of Iraq, Qassim al-Araji, visited Amman, where he discussed bilateral trade and the Turaybil border crossing with the Prime Minister of Jordan, Hani al-Mulki. On 20 February, Mr. Masum and Mr. Abadi separately received the

President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, with whom they discussed bilateral economic and trade relations. On 25 and 26 February, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Salim al-Jubouri, visited Doha, where he discussed regional developments and the reconstruction of liberated areas with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and senior government officials.

28. From 26 to 28 February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim Abdulkarim Al-Jafari, visited Moscow, where he and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dimitry Rogozin, co-chaired the seventh meeting of the Iraqi-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Research and Technological Cooperation. Upon arrival, Mr. Al-Jafari was received by the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, who reaffirmed the support of his Government for the efforts of the Government of Iraq to build national accord and respect for the interests of all ethnic, religious and political groups.

29. On 3 March, the Speaker, Mr. Al-Jubouri, visited Kuwait, where he met Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Speaker of the parliament of Kuwait, Marzouq Al-Ghanim, to discuss bilateral relations. On 5 March, Mr. Al-Abadi held a telephone conversation with King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, during which they discussed bilateral relations and the work of the Iraqi-Saudi Coordination Council for promoting bilateral trade and investment. On 5 and 6 March, the Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Shariatmadari, visited Baghdad, where he met, consecutively, the Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction, Electricity and Health. On 6 March, Mr. Masum received the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, to discuss continued assistance to internally displaced persons and the search for missing persons. On 7 March, Mr. Al-Abadi received the First Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Eshaq Jahangiri, to discuss bilateral ties and coordination. On 15 March, the Speaker, Mr. Al-Jubouri, visited Ankara, where he met the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and discussed strengthening bilateral ties, as well as the counter-terrorism operations of Iraq.

30. On 20 February, Mr. Al-Abadi reaffirmed that Iraq continued to seek international support in the fields of military training, logistics and intelligence gathering. On 21 and 22 February, he met Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs of the United States of America, Robert Karem, to discuss collaboration in the fight against terrorism. On 1 March, the Minister of Defence of Iraq, Irfan al-Hayali, received the Chief of the General Staff of Turkey, Hulusi Akar, to discuss counter-terrorism cooperation. On 5 March, Mr. Al-Abadi received the Secretary-General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, with whom he discussed countering violent extremism. On 15 March, Mr. Al-Abadi received a telephone call from the Vice-President of the United States, Mike Pence, during which they discussed the upcoming Council of Representatives elections, as well as Baghdad-Erbil relations.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

31. In anticipation of the Council of Representatives elections on 12 May, my Special Representative for Iraq and Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance engaged intensively with members of the Independent High Electoral Commission, government officials, members of parliament, representatives of political parties, women's groups, civil society

organizations and religious and community leaders. My Special Representative applauded the steady progress made by the Independent High Electoral Commission in election preparations and commended the commitment of the Commissioners. He underlined the importance of holding elections in an inclusive, participatory, transparent and secure way with broad participation, including women and youth, and confirmed the continued support and assistance of UNAMI for the Independent High Electoral Commission in preparing the elections, with full respect for the sovereignty, Constitution and laws of Iraq. He reiterated the need to ensure that new voting and result management technologies were correctly deployed and fully explained to stakeholders, to enhance confidence in their credibility, and underpinned by an audit of the system and its software by a respectable international company. UNAMI assistance with the electoral process also included facilitating development of a political parties' electoral code of honour, at the initiative of Iraqi political parties.

32. My Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance visited several camps for the displaced in Kirkuk and Baghdad governorates to advocate the inclusion of internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups in the upcoming elections. My Deputy Special Representative highlighted the importance of the participation of displaced persons, encouraging them to exercise their right to choose their parliamentary representatives. She underlined the need for measures to be put in place to ensure that first-time voters and vulnerable groups are enabled to register for and vote in the elections. Following the advocacy by UNAMI, the Independent High Electoral Commission decided on 21 February to allow displaced persons living in camps to vote via conditional absentee balloting.

33. My Deputy Special Representative also engaged with Turkmen, Arab and Kurdish representatives from Kirkuk to resolve outstanding issues in the Governorate, notably mediating discussion which led to agreement to hold Provincial Council elections in Kirkuk simultaneously with those in other governorates.

34. From 21 to 24 January, my Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenča, visited Iraq, which included a visit to Mosul. During his visit, he met with the senior leadership of the Government of Iraq, Members of the Council of Representatives and representatives of civil society, as well as the diplomatic community. He reiterated the continued and dedicated support of the United Nations for the promotion of a united and inclusive Iraq, national reconciliation, transitional justice and accountability, as well as strengthened regional cooperation and partnership.

35. While commending the Government of Iraq for its tremendous efforts to eliminate ISIL, my Special Representative urged the Government to continue its coordination with international partners and the United Nations in the fight against terrorism. During his visit on 6 and 7 March, the Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, underlined the importance of comprehensive counter-terrorism efforts in line with the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

36. My Special Representative continued his engagement with key stakeholders in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region. He welcomed the readiness for discussion, which had led to positive developments in relations between the two sides, including the re-opening of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports to international flights on 19 March and payment of civil servant salaries. He urged leaders to continue their dialogue in a spirit of genuine partnership to resolve outstanding issues, underlining the importance of stability and the harmonious coexistence of all Iraqi components.

37. My Special Representative also continued to pursue his efforts with the Iraqi leadership and regional countries in support of national reconciliation, calling for

continued momentum and a genuine national political reconciliation dialogue that would pave the way for smooth government formation after the elections. He also called on Iraq to address the impact of ISIL on the Iraqi people, including combating extremist ideologies and promoting moderation and tolerance.

38. My Special Representative welcomed the announcement made by the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Ahmet Üzümcü, of the completion of destruction of the country's chemical weapons remnants. He characterized the destruction of chemical weapons remnants as a notable achievement, which would help Iraq fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

B. Electoral assistance

39. The Independent High Electoral Commission continued its preparations for the Council of Representatives elections of 12 May. On 20 February, the Commission ran a ballot lottery to determine the number and order by which the 88 political entities contesting the elections would appear on the ballot paper. The Commission has also submitted the list of nearly 7,000 candidates for vetting to the Supreme National Commission for Accountability and Justice, the Directorate of Criminal Records and the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and Education. Once this vetting process is completed, the Independent High Electoral Commission will finalize the list of candidates and proceed with printing of the ballot papers. Preparations for out-of-country voting are ongoing in 19 countries in which significant numbers of eligible Iraqi voters reside. The Commission has reported that, as at 18 March, 6,181,418 million voter cards had been distributed, that is, 44.33 per cent of the total.

40. UNAMI continued to provide targeted technical assistance and advisory support on various aspects of electoral preparations. Technical advisories were shared with the Commission on measures to facilitate the voting of internally displaced persons. UNAMI also engaged with the Commission on the technologies being deployed for the elections. From 27 February to 1 March, the Commission organized a technical integration meeting that included the signing of an agreement between the Commission and its two technology providers on the interoperability of the technological devices for voter verification and election results management. UNAMI attended the meetings in an advisory capacity. UNAMI has continued to encourage the Commission to undertake a simulation process, now scheduled for 14 April, to test the performance of the devices and software systems to be used for the elections. It is a significant undertaking, involving 56,000 locations in Iraq.

41. From 3 to 12 March, a United Nations electoral needs assessment mission was deployed to Iraq to determine progress in the preparations for the elections, following up on an initial visit in November 2017. The delegation met with various interlocutors, including Independent High Electoral Commission officials, members of parliament, representatives of political parties, civil society organizations, the media and United Nations entities, as well as international partners engaged in the Council of Representatives elections.

42. In the absence of a firm date for the Kurdistan Region parliamentary, presidential and Provincial Council elections, its Independent High Electoral Commission focused efforts on evaluating the voter registry. On 25 February, its representatives met the Board of Commissioners in Baghdad to discuss arrangements on the sharing of the voter registry.

C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities

43. Armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a heavy toll on civilians. From 20 February to 31 March 2018, 16 civilians were killed and 139 wounded, primarily by explosions in Baghdad. By comparison, from 20 December 2017 to 18 February 2018, 69 civilians were killed and 327 wounded. The leading cause of civilian casualties remains the use of improvised explosive devices. For example, on 20 February, in western Mosul, an improvised explosive device detonated inside the house of a family which had just returned home from displacement, killing two.

44. The remnants of ISIL continued to focus attacks on members of the Iraqi police, Iraqi security forces and the popular mobilization forces in Ninawa and Kirkuk governorates. For example, on 24 February, ISIL fighters killed two police officers and wounded another at their checkpoint in the Khabbaz oil field, Yaychi subdistrict, south-west of the city of Kirkuk. Civilians also continued to be targeted by unknown gunmen in Mosul district: on 21 February, in eastern Mosul, gunmen stopped the car of the local mukhtar and shot him dead. The perpetrators are suspected of being affiliated with ISIL.

45. As at 29 March, the Department of Yazidi Affairs in the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that 3,154 Yazidis (1,471 women and 1,683 men) remained in ISIL captivity.

46. Iraqi courts continued to issue death sentences for terrorism-related crimes. To date in 2018, the Supreme Judicial Council has publicly announced the imposition of 22 death sentences for terrorism-related crimes, including against 1 German woman, 1 Syrian man, 1 man of unknown nationality and 16 Turkish women. The Government of Iraq has not responded to a request by UNAMI for information on terrorism-related indictments, convictions and death penalty sentences and on where and when executions have been carried out.

47. The bodies of civilians continued to be recovered from the rubble in Mosul. As at 28 March, the civilian defence corps has recovered a total of 1,842 bodies of civilians, of which 3 were found in eastern Mosul. From 25 to 27 March, the civilian defence corps recovered the bodies of 47 civilians, including 11 women and 7 children, from underneath the rubble in western Mosul.

48. UNAMI continued to advocate accountability in the context of human rights violations and abuses committed during the ongoing armed conflict, in particular for international crimes that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and, possibly, genocide. Following an Iraqi-led process supported by the Mission, a proposed draft law on the creation of a specialized court for international crimes was delivered by the Mission to Iraqi institutions, parliamentarians and civil society actors, for their consideration.

49. Mass graves continued to be discovered in areas previously under ISIL control. For example, on 21 February, in Qayyarah subdistrict, Mosul district, Ninawa governorate, local police discovered a mass grave containing the bodies of 76 persons who may have been victims of ISIL.

50. The Mission also continued to advocate the appropriate protection of mass graves, with the aim of collecting, securing and preserving evidence. In preparation for the arrival of an independent investigative team, currently being established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) to support the efforts of Iraq to hold ISIL accountable for its crimes committed in Iraq, UNAMI has compiled a compendium of mass graves in Iraq (to date) and shared it with Iraqi authorities, including the Mass Graves Department in the Martyrs Foundation, and other key

stakeholders such as the Independent High Commission for Human Rights. Since June 2014, the Mission has recorded the discovery of 117 mass graves resulting from the conflict with ISIL. The estimated number of victims buried in these graves, as reported to UNAMI, is between 6,006 and 12,505.

51. On 5 March, my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, concluded an eight-day visit to Iraq, during which she heard first-hand accounts of survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by ISIL. During discussion with Iraqi officials on questions of justice and accountability, she stressed the importance of ensuring that alleged perpetrators are held accountable not only for the crime of terrorism but for the full extent of the crimes of sexual violence perpetrated on Iraqi women and children, including abduction, rape, sexual slavery and forced marriages. She noted that her Office stands ready, together with the soon-to-be-established investigative team, as requested in Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to work directly with Iraqi judges, investigators and prosecutors. The Special Representative, together with the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, inaugurated the Baghdad premises of the first shelter outside the Kurdistan Region for women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The shelter is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund.

52. On 7 and 8 March, the Government of Iraq organized a two-day conference to mark International Women's Day, at which it circulated a draft report on the implementation of the Iraqi National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The conference was organized by the Higher National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women and the Directorate for Empowering Iraqi Women, both under the Council of Ministers, in conjunction with the national team on Security Council resolution 1325 under the auspices of Mr. Al-Abadi. The aim of the conference was to solicit views from local communities, civil society organizations and internally displaced women in order to further develop the draft implementation report before its planned submission to the Security Council later this year.

53. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), received reports of 13 incidents of violations against children, affecting 22 children. Of those incidents, 10 were verified, affecting 19 children (all boys). In Ninawa Governorate, five boys were verified to have been recruited and used by armed actors, while in Ninawa, Kirkuk and Salah-al-Din governorates four boys were killed and 10 others injured by various types of explosive material. In Ninawa Governorate, a school was used for military purposes.

54. On 7 March, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, accompanied by representatives of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met a United Nations delegation from the Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Department of Political Affairs, UNICEF and UNAMI. The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, who also chairs the newly established high-level inter-ministerial committee on monitoring and reporting, confirmed the Government's willingness to address both alleged and verified grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, through establishing and enhancing protective and preventive measures. The delegation also met the National Security Adviser, Mahmoud al-Bayati, in his capacity as designated focal point for the country task force on monitoring and reporting, to discuss next steps for the development of an action plan to address the recruitment and use of children by the popular mobilization forces, which were listed as a non-State armed group in the 2016 annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/72/361-S/2017/821).

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

55. The humanitarian crisis in Iraq has entered a new phase, with thousands of displaced persons returning to their areas of origin. Retaken areas are being cleared of explosive hazards and rubble, and major efforts are under way to restore electricity, water and sewage networks, re-establish the Government's social protection mechanisms, including the public distribution system, jump-start local economies and open schools and health centres.

56. On 6 March, the Government of Iraq, the United Nations and humanitarian partners jointly launched their humanitarian plans for 2018, based on an estimation that 8.7 million people across Iraq will require some form of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian partners are committed to providing assistance to highly vulnerable Iraqis in the hardest-hit areas and ensuring that they receive the protection that they require and to which they are entitled under international humanitarian law. Humanitarian partners will target 3.4 million vulnerable people with assistance in 2018, for which $569 million is required. This is a significant reduction from 2017, when 6.2 million people were targeted, reflecting the evolving nature of need of the crisis-affected population and the growing capacity and reach of national institutions, as well as the expanding role of development actors.

57. By the end of February, there were 2.3 million remaining displaced, while 3.5 million returned to their homes and communities. Many displacement camps are being consolidated and decommissioned, and governorate returns committees — comprised of Government, non-governmental organizations and United Nations representatives — are in the process of being established to ensure that returns are voluntary, safe and dignified. Despite all the efforts in place, there are still reports of forced and premature returns in Baghdad, Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates and of obstructed returns and re-displacement of people back to camps in Anbar Governorate. There are limited alternatives for those displaced families unable to return owing to individual circumstances, vulnerabilities or security concerns. Humanitarian partners continue to advocate with authorities to prevent forced and premature returns and to pursue viable alternatives for displaced families unable to return.

58. The registration of humanitarian international non-governmental organizations remains a slow and cumbersome process. Negotiations are ongoing to streamline the procedures, and obstacles are being identified and raised with the authorities. In the meantime, the Government has facilitated the approval of more than 1,000 fast-track visas for international humanitarian staff without valid entry documentation. Efforts continue to enable the provision of humanitarian assistance to those people in need with the fewest bureaucratic impediments possible.

59. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization continued to safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism, facilitate returns and lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery. This was achieved through repairing public infrastructure, providing grants to small businesses and women-headed households, boosting the capacity of local government and providing short-term employment through public works schemes in areas directly impacted by ISIL. Over 2,000 projects are either completed, under way or being designed in the 31 liberated towns and districts within which UNDP has been asked to work. This includes the key areas of Anbar, Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk governorates.

60. In Anbar governorate, repairs to the Japanese Bridge were completed in March, connecting over 30,000 commuters and commercial traffic to western Anbar. In Ninawa Governorate, electricity was restored to the new water treatment plant in west

Mosul, providing clean drinking water for nearly 500,000 people. In the Ninawa Plains, work was done to restore health services, notably the completion of the first phase of the rehabilitation of Hamdaniyah Hospital in February. Prior to the conflict, roughly 1,000 patients visited the hospital daily for outpatient services, reaching approximately 500,000 people.

61. In support of the major efforts being made by the Government of Iraq to stabilize newly liberated areas through the Funding Facility for Stabilization, my Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs worked closely with the Iraqi security forces, government and parliamentary representatives, civil society and stabilization teams to identify areas critical to consolidate military gains and where violent extremism is likely to emerge. During the reporting period, UNDP and the Government of Iraq agreed that the priority for the Funding Facility in 2018 will be to support the rigorous interventions of the Government in five key strategic areas: Mosul, western Ninawa, the Baiji-Hadar corridor, the broader Hawijah district and western Anbar.

62. On 14 March, Mr. Al-Abadi, with assistance from UNDP, at his request, convened a conference of leaders from all minority communities in the Ninawa Plains. In preparation for the conference, the National Reconciliation Commission held a series of meetings and round tables with each group in order to better understand their demands. Prime Minister Abadi gave the keynote speech and the Government announced initiatives that it will pursue in the area.

63. The clearance of explosive hazards in the old city of Mosul continued. UNMAS located over 800 explosive hazards at one site alone during the reporting period, and over 27,000 have been removed from western Mosul since mid-2017, reducing the threat for returning civilians. In the al-Maidan neighbourhood in western Mosul, UNMAS cleared 491 explosive hazards. Over 100 suicide belts were removed from decaying corpses in February, and UNMAS anticipates that more will be found in the rubble.

64. UNMAS has established a presence in Kirkuk in anticipation of survey and clearance operations in Hawijah and surrounding areas and has been shown a stockpile of over 12,000 explosive items collected by the local authorities. These could pose a threat to nearby civilians if the local authorities are not provided with support to destroy the items. Following efforts by the Government of Iraq, the international community and UNMAS, two non-governmental mine action organizations received registration from the federal Government and will become operational once their accreditation is completed.

65. Following the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, meetings were held between the World Bank Group and the United Nations to continue formalization of the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Financing Facility. The Iraq Recovery and Development directors' level contact group, which includes the World Bank Group, the United Nations and key donors, met on 15 and 29 March to discuss progress on establishing the core oversight, coordination and funding mechanisms for the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Framework.

66. On 11 and 18 March, the United Nations country team met to review progress and next steps for the recovery and resilience programme and discussed the proposed funding mechanism. On 14 March, an informal meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum was briefed by the World Bank Group and the United Nations on progress with establishing the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Financing Facility, on the United Nations Recovery and Resilience Fund, and on the formalization of the Government's Executive Committee structure.

67. A workshop on mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in national and subnational development plans was held in Baghdad on 4 and 5 March. A team of UNDP Sustainable Development Goals experts facilitated the workshop, with more than 100 participants from ministries, governorates, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies. Two key outcomes were: agreement on levels of support from the United Nations to promote integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into the national medium-term development plan; and the identification of challenges and opportunities for strengthening alignment of the national Development Plan 2018–2022 with the Sustainable Development Goals.

68. A regional workshop on common country assessments and preparation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks was held in Amman from 20 to 23 March. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together United Nations staff from Iraq, Syria and Yemen to explore developing the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in complex environments. Participants from Iraq included senior programme staff from UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Integrated Coordination Office for Development and Humanitarian Affairs. This team will begin preparing for system-wide engagement on the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

E. Security and operational issues

69. The United Nations in Iraq continued to implement robust security risk mitigation measures which allowed it to deliver programmes and activities in a complex and changing security environment. Despite significant security challenges, the United Nations and its partners remain actively engaged in political, electoral, humanitarian and development activities countrywide, on the basis of programme criticality and in close coordination with the Government of Iraq. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security supports UNAMI and 18 United Nations agencies in Iraq. The United Nations agencies recently increased their field presence in order to meet growing operational requirements. Currently, there are 794 international and 1,600 national staff members operating from seven United Nations offices across the country.

70. Following the Independent External Assessment of UNAMI, I established an interdepartmental and inter-agency group, led by the Department of Political Affairs, to develop an implementation plan for the assessment recommendations, in close collaboration with UNAMI and the United Nations country team. UNAMI has since taken steps towards implementation. In its revised 2018 budget, UNAMI included measures responding to recommendations falling within its immediate purview, for example, to augment the presence of UNAMI outside Baghdad. Additional recommendations will be addressed in the context of the 2019 budget proposal, pending consideration by the mandate of the Security Council in July 2018.

71. The implementation of recommendations related to coordination, performance reporting and management of premises is on track. For example, a Department of Safety and Security team has reviewed the security architecture on the basis of current threat levels and examined facility perimeter protection and access control measures in Baghdad, Erbil and Kirkuk.

72. There has been severe pressure on staff accommodation. A number of accommodation units in Baghdad were seriously damaged by earthquakes in January 2018, and some staff had to be relocated to temporary accommodation. Repairs to damaged buildings, funded from a trust fund provided by the Government of Iraq in 2009, are currently under way.

IV. Observations

73. I welcome the adoption of the legal framework governing the organization of the Council of Representatives elections and the continued commitment of the Council of Ministers to ensuring a safe and secure environment for holding elections. It is of crucial importance that all efforts be made to enable the conduct of the elections in a credible and inclusive environment in which all Iraqis, men and women, from all governorates, are given the opportunity to participate, free from fear and intimidation.

74. I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to provide advice, support and assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Government of Iraq with regard to election preparations, as mandated by the Security Council. Only a few weeks remain before Iraqis go to the polls to choose their next democratically elected representatives. I welcome the efforts by the Commission to adopt the necessary measures to promote participation of those eligible voters who may remain displaced at the time of the elections. At the same time, I urge the Commission to undertake all necessary steps to safeguard the integrity of the polling, vote counting and transmission of election results, in the light of the new technologies being deployed. For the electoral results to be acceptable, the process must remain transparent. I also encourage a more intensified outreach campaign to familiarize voters and the wider public with these new election features and how they will affect voting. In addition, I welcome the efforts by the Government and its security institutions to put in place the necessary arrangements to enable the safe and orderly conduct of the elections.

75. I call upon all candidates and political party leaders to engage in a free and fair electoral competition which is based on mutual respect and promotes the national interest and stability of Iraq. To that end, I commend the efforts of political parties across the political spectrum to develop an electoral code of honour, as testimony to their commitment to the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. UNAMI remains committed to supporting those efforts, at the request of the political parties of Iraq.

76. I am encouraged by the progress in relations between Baghdad and Erbil, with the opening of regional airports to international flights and the provision of salaries for Kurdistan region employees. I call upon the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to build on these positive steps and to act expeditiously to address all outstanding issues between them, in line with the Constitution. There is no sustainable alternative to genuine dialogue, and UNAMI remains ready to facilitate discussion if requested by both parties.

77. I note the request of the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region to set a date for the next cycle of regional elections. I remind all parties in the region of the importance of holding regular and credible elections, which provide elected institutions with their legitimacy.

78. I am also pleased by the agreement reached by Members of Parliament, which allows for the holding on 22 December 2018 of the first Provincial Council elections in Kirkuk since 2005. At the same time, I am concerned by the negative effect on governance and security caused by the failure to reconvene the current Provincial Council and to elect a new Governor. I urge all parties to take these steps without further delay.

79. I welcome the continuous efforts of the Government of Iraq to strengthen its ties with neighbouring countries and other international partners on the basis of mutual political, economic and security interests. I commend the strong support pledged by the international community to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, and I call

upon the international community to continue its support for the efforts of Iraq to combat terrorism, diversify its economy and counter corruption.

80. I encourage the Government of Iraq to pass a law establishing a jurisdiction to deal with serious international crimes in Iraq — crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide — for the benefit of the people of Iraq. A proposed draft law on the subject which emerged from an Iraqi-led process involving Iraqi legal experts, academics, judges, prosecutors, members of parliament and representatives of civil society has been presented by UNAMI to the Presidency of the Council of Representatives for its consideration. Adoption of such a law would represent a significant achievement for the country by providing the legal mechanism for international crimes to be addressed in Iraq, in accordance with international standards.

81. I would like to praise the Government of Iraq for the detailed planning and the goals that they have set, building on their historic victory against ISIL, as detailed in the country's Reconstruction and Development Framework, the poverty reduction strategy and the national Development Plan. I urge the international community to continue their strong support and engagement, evident at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, to assist Iraq in responding to some of the underlying issues that contributed to the rise of ISIL. In addition to continued support for explosive hazard mitigation, reconstruction and economic stimulus, further issues will need to be addressed in order to protect military gains, attenuate the threat of insurgency and achieve more durable stability and security for the people of Iraq.

82. I accordingly urge Member States to continue their strong support for the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization. To consolidate military gains and protect communities against the resurgence of violence and extremism, the Funding Facility is supporting stabilization activities in five key strategic areas. Some cities in the five strategic areas were liberated only in late 2017 and the Funding Facility is critically underfunded in areas where the risk of the re-emergence of violence is highest.

83. I also urge Member States to consider the importance of the recovery and resilience programme in fast-tracking the social dimensions of reconstruction in Iraq. Three components of the recovery and resilience programme will be implemented in high-priority communities where violent extremism may re-emerge unless steps are taken to restore community trust, build confidence in the Government and open up economic opportunities. In tandem with our humanitarian and stabilization efforts, the recovery and resilience programme is critical to Iraq, and Member States are requested to consider supporting it accordingly.

84. Approximately 8.7 million people will require humanitarian support in 2018, while the humanitarian partners will provide assistance to 3.4 million people. Continued support by the international community for the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan is essential. I strongly urge the Government to redouble its efforts to create the necessary conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons. In order for the United Nations and its partners to address the critical needs of the most vulnerable, it is important that donors provide timely support to the Humanitarian Response Plan. Regrettably, as at 25 March, only $52 million of the required $569 million have been funded.

85. Finally, I would like to thank my outgoing Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs, Lise Grande, for her truly outstanding work over the last three years in Iraq. I would also like to express sincere appreciation to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and the staff of the United Nations in Iraq for their courageous, sustained efforts in implementing the United Nations mandate in Iraq under very challenging circumstances.

United Nations S/2018/360

Security Council

Distr.: General
16 April 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the credentials of the alternate representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on the Security Council

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations stating that Mrs. Verónica Cordova Soria has been appointed alternate representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, that letter constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

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General Assembly
Security Council

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General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda items 35 and 40

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to convey herewith the records of ceasefire violations by the Republic of Armenia in February and March 2018 (see annexes I and II).*

During the two months of the reporting period, the armed forces of Armenia violated the ceasefire regime 3,477 and 3,115 times, respectively, and continued to use large-calibre guns and heavy weaponry from their positions in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

As can be seen from the attached information, the armed forces of Armenia deliberately heighten tensions on the ground to challenge the prospects of lasting peace. Such a strategy stands in stark contrast to the norms and principles of international law and the international commitments of Armenia, and undermines the ongoing efforts towards a political settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Despite the Security Council's demand, in its resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), for the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia has continued to violate the principle of territorial integrity for over 25 years. The military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce an outcome desired by Armenia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* The annexes are being circulated in the language of submission only.

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Annex I to the letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Violations of the ceasefire by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia for February 2018*

Dates	*Direction (locality)*	*Weapons used*	*Number of ceasefire violations*	*Casualties and damage*
1–28 February	**Aghdam district, Azerbaijan**			
	Afatly village	AK	11	
	Ahmadali village	AK	20	
	Ahmadaghali village	AK	52	
	Ayag Garvand village	AK	12	
	Bash Garvand village	AK	3	
	Chamanly village	AK/DShK	85	
	Chiragly village	AK/AKM	70	
	Evoghlu village	AK	2	
	Garadaghli village	AK	9	
	Mammadbaghirly village	AK	39	
	Mirashilly village	AK/AKM	41	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM/DShK	120	
	Orta Garvand	AK	55	
	Saryjaly village	AK	3	
	Yuzbashily village	AK/AKM	4	
	Zangishaly village	AK	13	
	Aghjabadi district, Azerbaijan			
	Gyamaddynly village	AK	125	
	Minakhorlu village	AK	33	
	Dashkasan district, Azerbaijan			
	Alkhanchally village	AKM/DShK	14	
	Tazakand village	AKM	8	
	Zivilyan village	AKM	30	
	Opposite positions	AK	1	
	Fizuli district, Azerbaijan			
	Ashaghy Abdurrahmanli village	AK/AKM	88	
	Alkhanly village	AK	43	
	Horadiz village	AK	108	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	479	
	Shukurbayli village	AKM	58	
	Gazakh district, Azerbaijan			
	Ashaghi Askipara village	AKM	2	
	Bala Jafarli village	AK/AKM	23	

Abbreviations: AK, Kalashnikov assault rifle; AKM, modernized Kalashnikov assault rifle; DShK, heavy machine gun; OSV, semi-automatic sniper rifle.

* Settlements of the Republic of Azerbaijan included in this information are under occupation by the Republic of Armenia or situated close to the fire point areas.

Dates	*Direction (locality)*	*Weapons used*	*Number of ceasefire violations*	*Casualties and damage*
	Farahli village	AK/AKM/DShK	40	
	Jafarli village	AKM	12	
	Gaymagly village	AKM/DShK	36	
	Gosha village	DShK	2	
	Gushchu Ayrim village	AKM/DShK	45	
	Gyzylhajili village	AK/AKM/DShK	42	
	Kamarli village	AK/AKM/DShK	51	
	Kohna Gyshlag village	AK/AKM/DShK	14	
	Mazam village	AK/DShK	7	
	Musakoy village	AKM/DShK	33	
	Shikhly village	AKM	2	
	Unnamed heights	AK/AKM	67	
	Gedebey district, Azerbaijan			
	Garavallar village	AKM	8	
	Dordlar village	AKM/DShK	5	
	Galakand village	AKM	10	
	Gasimaghali village	AKM	17	
	Goyali village	AKM	23	
	Mutudara village	AKM	58	
	Novoivanovka village	AK/AKM/DShK	15	
	Unnamed heights	AKM	34	
	Zamanly village	AKM/DShK	29	
	Goranboy district, Azerbaijan			
	Balligaya village	AKM	11	
	Gargujag village	AKM	5	
	Gulustan village	AKM	45	
	Kharkhaput village	AKM	5	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	19	
	Tapgaragoyunlu village	AK/AKM	78	
	Unnamed heights	AKM	9	
	Unnamed positions	AKM	46	
	Yenikand village	AKM/DShK	19	
	Yukhari Agjakend village	AKM	4	
	Zeyva village	AKM	6	
	Goygol district, Azerbaijan			
	Azgilli	AKM	2	
	Kurdalylar village	AK/AKM	27	
	Pirverdilar village	AKM	10	
	Jabrayil district, Azerbaijan			
	Ahmadalilar village	AK	20	
	Jojug Marjanli village	AK	45	
	Lala Ilahi heights	AK	68	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	27	

Dates	*Direction (locality)*	*Weapons used*	*Number of ceasefire violations*	*Casualties and damage*
	Khojavand district, Azerbaijan			
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	231	
	Tartar district, Azerbaijan			
	Borsunlu village	AK/AKM	47	
	Chayly village	AK/AKM	13	
	Damirchilar village	AK	27	
	Gapanli village	AK/AKM	64	
	Gazyan village	AK/AKM	45	
	Hasangaya village	AK/AKM/OSV	106	
	Jamilly village	AK	6	
	Karmiravan village	AK	20	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM/DShK	138	
	Tazakand village	AK/AKM	22	
	Tovuz district, Azerbaijan			
	Aghdam village	AK/AKM	71	
	Aghbulag village	AKM	3	
	Alibayli village	AKM	9	
	Asryk Jirdakhan village	AKM	4	
	Garalar village	AK/AKM	7	
	Kokhanaby village	AKM	52	
	Munjuglu village	AK/AKM	17	
	Opposite positions	AKM	4	
	Unnamed heights	AKM	44	

Annex II to the letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Violations of the ceasefire by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia for March 2018*

Dates	*Direction (locality)*	*Weapons used*	*Number of ceasefire violations*	*Casualties and damage*
1–31 March	**Aghdam district, Azerbaijan**			
	Afatly village	AK	2	
	Ahmadali village	AK	9	
	Ahmadaghali village	AK	36	
	Ayag Garvand village	AK	33	
	Chamanly village	AK	48	
	Chiragly village	AK/AKM	32	
	Evoghlu village	AK	2	
	Garadaghli village	AK	16	
	Javahirli village	AKM/60 mm M	4	
	Mahrizli village	AK	4	
	Mammadbaghirly village	AK	10	
	Mirashilly village	AK/AKM	18	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	135	
	Orta Garvand	AK	45	
	Saryjaly village	AK/AKM	21	
	Shahvalilar village	AKM	3	
	Shikhlar village	AK/AKM	12	
	Unnamed heights	AK	2	
	Yuzbashily village	AK	13	
	Zangishaly village	AK	25	
	Aghjabadi district, Azerbaijan			
	Gyamaddynly village	AK/AKM	109	
	Minakhorlu village	AK/AKM	44	
	Dashkasan district, Azerbaijan			
	Aghjingilli village	AK	1	
	Zivilyan village	AKM	1	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	3	
	Fizuli district, Azerbaijan			
	Ashaghy Abdurrahmanli village	AK/AKM	102	
	Alkhanly village	AK/AKM	36	
	Garagantapa mountain	AK	22	
	Horadiz village	AK	43	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	394	

Abbreviations: AK, Kalashnikov assault rifle; AKM, modernized Kalashnikov assault rifle; DShK, heavy machine gun; SVD, sniper rifle; 60mm/82mm M, mortar.

* Settlements of the Republic of Azerbaijan included in this information are under occupation by the Republic of Armenia or situated close to the fire point areas.

Dates	*Direction (locality)*	*Weapons used*	*Number of ceasefire violations*	*Casualties and damage*
	Shukurbayli village	AK/AKM	58	
	Gazakh district, Azerbaijan			
	Ashaghi Askipara village	AKM/DShK	5	
	Bala Jafarli village	AK/AKM	27	
	Dashsalahli village	AKM	1	
	Farahli village	AK/AKM	14	
	Jafarli village	AK/AKM	15	
	Gaymagly village	AKM/DShK	31	
	Gushchu Ayrim village	AK/AKM	49	
	Gyzylhajili village	AK/AKM	27	
	Kamarli village	AK/AKM/DShK	34	
	Kohna Gyshlag village	AKM/DShK	3	
	Mazam village	AKM	4	
	Musakoy village	AKM/DShK	17	
	Unnamed heights	AKM/DShK	7	
	Gedebey district, Azerbaijan			
	Ayrivang village	AKM	4	
	Galakand village	AKM	5	
	Goyali village	AKM/DShK	8	
	Mutudara village	AKM	18	
	Novoivanovka village	AKM	3	
	Unnamed heights	AKM	11	
	Zamanly village	AKM	7	
	Goranboy district, Azerbaijan			
	Balligaya village	AKM/DShK	3	
	Gargujag village	AKM	18	
	Girmizisaggallar village	AK	3	
	Gulustan village	AK/AKM	47	
	Kharkhaput village	AK/AKM	16	
	Meshali village	AKM/DShK	16	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	64	
	Tapgaragoyunlu village	AK/AKM/DShK	97	
	Unnamed heights	AK	4	
	Unnamed positions	AKM	43	
	Yenikand village	AK/AKM/DShK	40	
	Yukhari Agjakend village	AKM	15	
	Zeyva village	AK/AKM	43	
	Goygol district, Azerbaijan			
	Kurdalylar village	AKM/SVD	19	
	Pirverdilar village	AKM	1	
	Jabrayil district, Azerbaijan			
	Ahmadalilar village	AK	11	
	Jojug Marjanli village	AK/AKM	42	

Dates	*Direction (locality)*	*Weapons used*	*Number of ceasefire violations*	*Casualties and damage*
	Lala Ilahi heights	AK	69	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	6	
	Khojavand district, Azerbaijan			
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	216	
	Unnamed heights	AK	14	
	Tartar district, Azerbaijan			
	Borsunlu village	AK/AKM	65	
	Chayly village	AK/AKM	65	
	Damirchilar village	AK/AKM	47	
	Gapanli village	AK/AKM	70	
	Gazyan village	AK/AKM	80	
	Hasangaya village	AK/AKM/DShK	74	
	Husanli village	AK	6	
	Jamilly village	AK	24	
	Karmiravan village	AK/AKM	13	
	Namirli village	AK	4	
	Opposite positions	AK/AKM	115	
	Seyidimli village	AK/AKM	3	
	Tazakand village	AK/AKM	57	
	Tovuz district, Azerbaijan			
	Aghdam village	AK/AKM/DShK	32	
	Aghbulag village	AK/AKM	33	
	Alibayli village	AKM	8	
	Asryk Jirdakhan village	AKM	1	
	Garalar village	AK/AKM	5	
	Kokhanaby village	AK/AKM	15	
	Munjuglu village	AK/AKM	22	
	Opposite positions	AKM	1	
	Unnamed heights	AKM	11	

United Nations S/2018/362

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Original: English

Letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Peru and Sweden, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, hereby transmit a summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group held on 28 February 2018 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Ambassador

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Ambassador

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**
Ambassador

18-06161 (E) 230418

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Annex to the letter dated 16 April 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security: summary of the meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo held 28 February 2018

On 28 February 2018, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ahead of the expiration of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) at the end of March 2018. Members of the Security Council were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui, approximately two weeks after her arrival at her new post. Members of the Mission and the United Nations country team joined the meeting from Kinshasa and Goma by way of videoconference.

Member States asked questions about the Mission's engagement with the African Union on gender issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; fundraising efforts to date for the implementation of the country's national action plan on women, peace and security and the joint communiqué on conflict-related sexual violence; reasons behind the slight drop in voter registration rates among women and the rising violence against women and girls, including the abduction of girls; progress in gender mainstreaming throughout all areas of the work of the peacekeeping Mission, including with regard to the Stabilization Unit, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, community violence reduction and the Mission's engagement with armed groups; the role of women's civil society and human rights defenders and their relationship with the United Nations; and strategies and special measures to ensure women's political participation in the upcoming elections, both as voters and as candidates. Finally, Member States asked if there were other ways the Security Council could help advance the women and peace and security agenda beyond ensuring the inclusion of forceful language on that topic in the next resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the mandate of MONUSCO.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General noted that, during her first two weeks in the country, in addition to meeting the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and key ministers and ambassadors, she met with women's groups and women leaders, including young women, of both the government and the opposition, and had heard their views on the main issues affecting the country at this crucial juncture. Her answers to questions by experts of the Security Council include the main points of her intervention, and are set out below.

- The Security Council should maintain and strengthen the gender-related provisions in the peacekeeping mandate and in the upcoming resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The provisions should include support for the civil and political rights of women activists and human rights defenders, women's organizations and civil society networks, ensure dedicated gender expertise in the Mission and ensure the implementation of the national action plan on women, peace and security and the joint communiqué signed in 2013 on conflict-related sexual violence and the specific action plans adopted by the armed forces and the national police. The Special Representative emphasized the importance of creating meaningful spaces for women's civil society

organizations to ensure that the voices and agency of women inform the Mission's priorities on women, peace and security.

- Significant advances have been made with regard to accountability for sexual violence in the last few years, and further investments are needed for reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly for programmes that ensure their access to services, education and livelihood, and especially for programmes that provide socioeconomic reintegration support for internally displaced persons and returnees who are women. The government should ensure that the armed security forces are vetted, trained and equipped to effectively protect civilians.

- There was a 56 per cent increase in reports of sexual violence in 2017 compared with the previous year, and women were also victims of other human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings. During the political process, women are often targeted in efforts to intimidate candidates, voters and their communities, and to punish their male relatives, especially in the context of local elections, which are held at the same time as provincial and national elections. Even though women's share of the registered electorate is smaller than in previous elections (47 per cent compared with 52 per cent previously), especially in conflict-affected areas, owing to insecurity, that share still represents 21 million women who, despite poverty and violence, including extreme violence during the registration procedures in several places, queued up to participate in the process. They did their part, and now the government and its international partners must do their part in protecting and supporting their participation. Women's groups and lawmakers have tried to add parity requirements or quotas to the electoral law, but their efforts have been rejected. The Security Council and the international community, including the European Union, can still put pressure on the main political parties and incentivize women's representation in the upcoming elections. The role of women's civil society organizations is very important, and the Special Representative will continue to advocate for the adoption of a law to protect human rights defenders.

- MONUSCO will continue to implement a multidimensional approach to integrate a gender perspective into the delivery of its mandate. MONUSCO has introduced an innovative approach through the use of a gender marker to assess and improve the gender-responsiveness of the Mission's different sections and components. The Gender Affairs Unit trains approximately 450 staff every month, mostly men. The Mission aims to ensure that at least 30 per cent of active participants in community alert networks and local protection committees are women, in order to ensure that protection efforts integrate women's security needs and priorities more effectively.

- Within MONUSCO structures, however, and in spite of a recent directive to implement the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, only 3.5 per cent of military troops, 8 per cent of military experts, 5.4 per cent of staff officers, 10 per cent of personnel in formed police units, 18.8 per cent of individual police officers, 28 per cent of international civilian staff and 15 per cent of national staff are women. MONUSCO now has several women in positions of leadership, including the Special Representative, the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the Chief of Staff, and they will spare no efforts in pushing for gender equality in all these areas. The Special Representative stated that she would not allow a "women-led" peacekeeping mission to fail with regard to advancing gender equality. MONUSCO will ensure it meets the directive's immediate objective of raising the percentage of women among the international staff from 28 to 34 per cent before the end of the year, and the Special Representative asked

Security Council members to continue to remind troop- and police-contributing countries of the importance of deploying more women to the Mission.

- The African Women Leaders Network, which includes three prominent Congolese members representing the incumbent party, the opposition and civil society, provides a good venue for collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union. Other important partners include regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community; the Economic Community of Central African States; the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is a major player in the country; and government partners, including the Presidential Adviser on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, the Minister for Gender and the Minister for Human Rights, all of whom are women.

- The Special Representative also expressed her commitment to bring up these issues during her briefing to the Security Council on 7 March 2018, and to encourage the Council to demand enhanced periodic reporting from MONUSCO on these matters, including on the implementation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support policy on gender-responsive peacekeeping operations and the system-wide strategy on gender parity, and on measures to incentivize the deployment of women by troop- and police-contributing countries, the specific analysis of gender and conflict dynamics and the use of the Mission's good offices to advance women, peace and security.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, highlighted some of the recommendations shared in writing with the Group, in addition to those highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. These include the addition of stronger language and specificity to the mandate with regard to: protection for and support of women's human rights defenders and women activists and non-governmental organizations; support for women-led prevention and conflict-resolution initiatives, including the monitoring of electoral violence and intimidation; the need for the government and the United Nations to put in place specific plans and measures to ensure women's political participation in the upcoming elections, especially in conflict-affected provinces; the need to explicitly acknowledge the important role of gender advisers and gender expertise; and the need to update, fund and implement the national action plan on women, peace and security.

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict noted that, after a decade of reporting on sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2017 marked the first time that their annual report extended beyond the Kivus to include Ituri, Tanganyka and the Kasais, and that Twa militias were responsible for some of the worst allegations of sexual violence. In 2017, 804 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were verified by the United Nations, which represents a sharp increase and a return to pre-2014 levels of violence. The number of reported incidents collected by the United Nations Population Fund and partners has also doubled since 2016. In spite of the important gains and breakthroughs of the last few years--the appointment of the Presidential Adviser, the signing of the joint communiqué, the adoption of action plans by the military and the police, the pledges by individual commanders and the extensive training sessions and trials, including the arrest of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka and the milestone convictions in the Kavumu trial in 2017 — the worsening security situation and a lack of resources puts all this progress in jeopardy. For example, it is the first time that the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence do not have any dedicated funds to work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Women still do not have access to

reparations--and the law on reparations has been stalled — and even judicially mandated rewards remain unexecuted. The Security Council and the donor community must remain engaged and vigilant on this issue and maintain forceful language in the mandate with regard to the importance of women protection advisers and the full implementation of the 2013 joint communiqué, and emphasize that protecting women human rights defenders and civil society is always the best way to mitigate conflict-related sexual violence.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting and thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her extensive briefing, and stated that they looked forward to her participation in the meeting of the Security Council on 7 March and in a follow-up meeting of the Informal Expert Group before the end of the year.

United Nations A/72/836–S/2018/363

General Assembly
Security Council

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20 April 2018

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General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Agenda items 35 and 40

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 17 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit for your attention a statement by the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the anniversary of the occupation of the Kalbajar district of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the April escalation of 2016 (see annex).*

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* The annex is being circulated in the language of submission only.

18-06371 (E) 240418

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the anniversary of the occupation of the Kalbajar district of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the April escalation of 2016

On April 2, 1993 the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan was occupied by armed forces of Armenia as a part of its systematic policy of aggression and occupation against Azerbaijan. Kalbajar, which is located beyond administrative boundaries of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) of Azerbaijan, was occupied as a result of offensive operation mainly carried out from the territory of Armenia by use of heavy weaponry, Mi–24 helicopter gunships and advanced fixed wing aircraft.

As a result of occupation, around 60.000 inhabitants of Kalbajar were subjected to ethnic cleansing and expelled from their native lands, 511 innocent civilians were killed, 321 persons were taken hostage or went missing. Currently, more than 70.000 Kalbajar residents are temporarily residing in different regions of Azerbaijan as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Private property of Kalbajar inhabitants was plundered and destroyed. Along with the administrative centre of the Kalbajar district, around 150 villages, dozens of historical-cultural monuments, one museum, Istisu sanatorium, more than 110 libraries, around 100 schools, 9 kindergarten and hospitals were razed to the ground by the armed forces of Armenia.

Serious damage was inflicted on rich historical-cultural heritage of Kalbajar. The Museum of History in the Kalbajar district with its unique collection of ancient coins, ancient cemetery, Albanian cloister and churches in Vang village, Lech castle, Ulukhan castle, Galaboynu castle, Mosques in Kalbajar district and in the villages, Taglidash bridge, Cultural House named after Ashig Shamshir and other historical monuments were destroyed by the armed forces of Armenia.

The original architectural features of the Ganjasar and Khudavank cloisters, belonging to the ancient Albanian Christian heritage of Azerbaijan and having no connection with the Armenian Church, were changed and incorporated into the Armenian Church.

Amidst the ongoing military occupation, natural mineral resources of Kalbajar is subject to illegal exploitation. Since 2002, Base Metals CJSC, which is a wholly owned by subsidiary of the Armenia's Vallex Group CJSC, registered in Liechtenstein, has been exploiting Gyzylbulag underground copper-gold mine near Heyvaly village in the Kalbajar district. Predatory exploitation of that mine led to its almost complete depletion. Since 2007, GPM Gold, a subsidiary of GeoProMining Ltd., has been extracting ore in Soyudlu gold mine. As a result of predatory and illegal exploitation of mineral resources of Kalbajar serious damage has been inflicted on the environment.

The construction of the Vardenis-Aghdara highway through the occupied Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan is directly linked to gaining access to the areas in the occupied territories rich in natural resources and to facilitate extracting goods and minerals out of the occupied territories to Armenia and international markets.

Importing minerals, including gold extracted from the occupied Kalbajar and other regions of Azerbaijan by some western countries without due diligence is a matter of serious concern.

Armenia, in blatant violation of the international humanitarian law, transfers settlers of Armenian origin to the occupied territories, including the Kalbajar district, with a view to changing demographic and ethno-cultural features of these territories, which has also been documented by OSCE fact-finding mission.

In response to the occupation of the Kalbajar district, the President of the United Nations Security Council issued statement on 6 April 1993 on behalf of the Council reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states in the region. Following the Presidential Statement United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 822, which reaffirmed "the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory" and "demanded immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kalbajar district and other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan".

Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 822 (1993), the CSCE Minsk Group, composed of nine countries, worked out the "timetable of urgent steps" to implement the resolution. Instead of withdrawing its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as demanded by UNSCR, Armenia continued its aggression and occupied Agdam, Jabrayil, Gubadly, Fizuli and Zangilan regions of Azerbaijan in 1993. In response, the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) demanding immediate complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

In his report to the President of the Security Council dated 27 July 1993, the Chairman of the CSCE Minsk Conference, Mr. Mario Raffaelli, emphasized that the Armenian side had disregarded Security Council demands, launched an attack, seized new territories in Azerbaijan and challenged the mediation efforts towards a settlement.

Armenia until now continues to disregard the implementation demands of UNSCRs.

Escalation of situation along the line of contact on 2 April 2016 as the result of attacks by the armed forces of Armenia on settlements densely populated Azerbaijani civilians with heavy weapons once again demonstrated that the illegal presence of armed forces of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan remains major threat to regional peace and security. In response to the attacks of Armenia, the armed forces of Azerbaijan have taken counter measures, which resulted in providing security for the Azerbaijani civilians residing in close vicinity of the line of contact through liberation of strategically important territories and heights from occupation.

Armenia has to understand that occupation of Azerbaijan's lands, including Kalbajar district is temporary. The only way to achieve a durable and lasting settlement is to ensure the unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the exercise by the forcibly displaced persons of their inalienable right to return to their places of origin in safety and dignity. The Armenian side, instead of wasting time and misleading its own people and the international community, must cease its policy of annexation and ethnic cleansing, and comply with its international obligations and to engage constructively in the conflict settlement process.

All responsibility lies with Armenia for the maintenance of status quo of occupation.

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Security Council

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26 April 2018

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General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Agenda items 35 and 40

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 17 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit for your attention a statement by the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan concerning the destruction, desecration and appropriation of Azerbaijani historical and cultural heritage as a result of the continuing aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-06641 (E) 300418

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Statement from the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

27 March 2018

As an integral part of its military occupation policy against Azerbaijan, Armenia is pursuing a systematic policy of vandalism, destruction, theft, appropriation and falsification of tangible cultural assets and religious monuments in our occupied lands. The policy of destruction of the tangible cultural heritage in these lands and in the territory of Armenia that is historically Azerbaijani land is a heinous act not only against the Azerbaijani people but against the whole of humanity.

As reported by the Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC), the head of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Hikmet Hajiev, has made a statement expressing our position on a statement made by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Hajiev noted that, in a media interview, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia had himself indirectly acknowledged the situation and had tried to evade the international responsibility of Armenia as the occupying State. Nonetheless, cases of damage to and theft and destruction of the tangible cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people by Armenia have been documented in detail.

For example, in our occupied lands Armenia has damaged 738 historical monuments, 28 museums with more than 83,500 exhibits, 4 art galleries, 14 memorial sites and 1,891 tangible cultural heritage sites, including 1,107 cultural institutions. All the aforementioned monuments have been subjected to vandalism. The seventeenth-century mosque complex in Jabrayil district, the Yukhari Govharagha, Ashaghi Govharagha and Saatli Mosques in Shusha, dating from the eighteenth century, and the nineteenth-century Aghdam Mosque have not only been damaged and vandalized but, insultingly, have been turned into cattle sheds. Furthermore, in the city of Shusha, archaeological sites such as the Vagif Mausoleum, the house of Khurshidbanu Natavan and a number of caravanserais have been damaged and pillaged.

Albanian Christian churches in occupied districts including Khojaly, Kelbajar, Lachin and Khojavand, which have nothing to do with the Armenians, have been appropriated; their architectural style has been changed and they are now presented as Armenian monuments. Particular mention should be made of Gandzasar and Khudaveng, Albanian Christian churches located in Kelbajar district that date from the Middle Ages. Since 2003, illegal archaeological excavations have been taking place in the Azokh cave and around Aghdam.

The cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people in historically Azerbaijani areas in the territory of Armenia has suffered the same fate. The Demirbulag Mosque in Yerevan has been razed to the ground and the Blue Mosque has been "renovated" with a view to changing its original features. The architectural monuments that have been destroyed include the Haji Novruzali bey Mosque in Yerevan, built by Gara Seyid in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Sardar's Palace and the Khan Saray palace complex. The Sardar's Mosque in Yerevan suffered systematic damage before being completely destroyed in 2014.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have prepared detailed reports on the destruction by Armenia of Islamic historical and cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and on the destruction and desecration of the historical and cultural heritage of Azerbaijan resulting from the continued aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan. These have been submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other international organizations.

As a result, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation regularly adopts resolutions concerning the destruction and desecration of the historical and cultural heritage of the Islamic religion and the destruction of shrines in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan resulting from Armenian aggression. The latest such resolutions were adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization at its sessions held in Kuwait, Uzbekistan and Côte d'Ivoire in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism have repeatedly, at the international level, raised the question of organizing a fact-finding mission to assess the current status of the tangible cultural heritage in our occupied lands. Armenia, which acknowledges responsibility for the heinous acts committed against this heritage, is doing everything possible to prevent such a mission. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mammadyarov, during a meeting with the Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, at the Organization's headquarters in January this year, once again raised the question of sending a UNESCO fact-finding mission to our occupied territories.

These acts by Armenia constitute a flagrant violation of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the 1954 Hague Convention) and of the commitments entered into by Armenia under the Second Protocol to the Convention, which was adopted in 1999. Article 9 of the Protocol enshrines the obligation of an occupying Party to prohibit and prevent, in relation to an occupied territory, illicit trade in cultural property or in any samples from archaeological excavations, the export thereof from the territory, and any change to or destruction of particular historical or scientific evidence.

Unlawful acts against cultural property and cultural heritage during armed conflict are considered war crimes under international criminal law. The Republic of Armenia as a State bears direct international legal responsibility for the acts of vandalism committed in the occupied territories.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism will continue jointly to draw the attention of the international community to the acts of vandalism committed by Armenia in our occupied territories, including against the historical and cultural heritage of the Azerbaijani people in the territory of Armenia.

United Nations A/ES-10/776–S/2018/365

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Security Council

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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 13 April 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you once again to reiterate our urgent appeals for the international community to take responsible and prompt action to stop the intentional killing and injuring of Palestinian civilians in the occupied and besieged Gaza Strip by Israeli occupying forces.

For the third week in a row, Palestinians throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and particularly in Gaza, continue to engage in the "Great March of Return", a peaceful civilian protest against Israel's illegal occupation, oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people for decades. Demonstrations continue in the hopes of drawing attention to the tragic plight and miseries of our people and putting international pressure on Israel to lift its illegal 10-year air, land and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip, end its occupation of Palestinian land and recognize the right of return of Palestine refugees. We recall in this regard that most of Gaza's population is composed of Palestinians who have been forcibly expelled from their homes and lands since 1948.

In launching the March, the Palestinian people have chosen a peaceful path to voice their demands in the face of decades of Israeli violence, colonization and cruelty. In this regard, we recall that the Palestinian people have every right to protest Israel's illegal occupation and oppression. Peaceful protest is a legitimate exercise of the rights of freedom of expression, assembly and association, and Israel, as the occupying power, is obligated to protect and respect the human rights of the Palestinians living under its occupation.

Yet, in total disregard and violation of the established rules and principles of international law, peaceful Palestinian protestors continue to be deliberately targeted by Israeli soldiers, who have been instructed to fire live ammunition from sniper rifles, rubber-coated steel bullets and stun grenades and tear gas canisters from drones at innocent civilians. We condemn in the strongest terms the wilful killing and

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injuring of civilians, which amounts to grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

As of the writing of the present letter, the Israeli occupying forces have killed 1 Palestinian civilian and injured at least 542 Palestinian civilians, bringing the total number of Palestinian civilian demonstrators killed since the Great March of Return began on 30 March 2018 to 31 persons, including 3 children, and the number of wounded to 3,620 persons, including 445 children and 152 women. Of those injured, 106 remain in serious or critical condition.

We must also draw attention to the deliberate killing of Yaser Murtaja, a young journalist and documentary filmmaker who was shot dead by Israeli occupying forces on 6 April 2018 while wearing his helmet and vest both clearly marked "PRESS". Murtaja was killed while he was filming a nurse, a doctor and a 12-year-old student who had been protesting, two days before he was set to start working with a humanitarian organization, the Norwegian Refugee Council.

In this regard, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, notorious for his violent rhetoric and incitement, attempted to justify this cold-blooded murder by claiming that Murtaja was operating a drone when he was shot, an assertion that even the Israeli military has denied. Such libellous claims prove once again the occupying Power's readiness to defame and dehumanize Palestinians, even in death.

Murtaja's case is not an isolated one, as the deliberate killing of Palestinian civilians and the use of lethal force against unarmed protesters continue to be widely perpetrated by the Israeli occupation machine. This week, a disturbing video emerged showing Israeli snipers shooting unarmed Palestinian protestor Tamer Abu Daqqa, age 28, near the Gaza boundary fence, with soldiers in the background cheering and shouting expletives as he fell to the ground.

While this shocking video spurred outrage among international public opinion and civil society, several Israeli leaders instead condoned the soldiers' actions, with Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett stating, "I prefer a whooping solider to a grieving father". Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan stated that he was "unable to comprehend what isn't okay in the video". Defence Minister Lieberman also stated, "The sniper deserves a promotion, whereas the cameraman deserves a demotion".

Moreover, an Israeli military officer said in an interview that a Palestinian "does not necessarily have to be armed or trying to cut or climb over the fence" to justify the army opening fire. The Israeli military's preliminary inquiry into the soldiers' behaviour found that the sniper who had shot Tamer Abu Daqqa "acted appropriately". A field researcher at Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, however, said that the video reflects the truth about the hundreds of times Israeli snipers target Palestinians for "fun".

Another recent casualty caused by Israel's wilful, excessive and lethal use of force against Palestinian civilians occurred yesterday, 12 April 2018, when Israeli occupying forces shot in the chest and killed Abdullah Muhammad Shahri, age 28, during protests east of Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, reconfirming this disturbing pattern of cruel and deliberate violence against the occupied people.

It is clear from successive declarations and statements by Israeli government and military officials that, to Israel, Palestinian lives do not matter. Israeli officials have been using inflammatory rhetoric and incitement against peaceful Palestinian protesters since and prior to the start of the Great March of Return, threatening to treat protesters as legitimate targets, including through the use of live fire.

Among other incendiary and racist remarks, Defence Minister Lieberman has stated, "There are no innocent people in the Gaza Strip". Similarly, in a video posted

on an Israeli news site, the Foreign Affairs Director of Netanyahu's Likud Party, Eli Hazan, asserted that "all 30,000 [protesters] are legitimate targets". In addition, a spokesman for the Israeli occupation forces tweeted an image of a group of Palestinian children seen through the lens of a sniper's rifle, with the message "We are watching you closely".

All such declarations and comments constitute admission of deliberate, planned and institutionalized intent to violate international law, at the highest levels of command of Israel, the occupying Power. In the face of such increased rhetoric and incitement, it is high time for the international community to consider these facts and act accordingly, in line with international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, rather than fall prey once more to Israel's propaganda.

Against this extremely worrying backdrop, we welcome the warning issued by the International Criminal Court in the context of the Great March of Return that "any person who incites or engages in acts of violence, including by ordering, requesting, encouraging or contributing in any other manner to the commission of crimes within the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction" may face trial.

We also welcome the calls issued on 6 April 2018 by United Nations human rights experts, namely the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, urging the international community to "ensure accountability through an independent and impartial investigation into the Israeli response".

As Palestinian casualties and tensions continue to mount, such moral, ethical and responsible stands are more urgent than ever to stem the tide of violence and incitement by this cruel occupation against our people. In this regard, it must also be noted that Israeli settler violence, hatred and terror against Palestinians is also on the rise. Just yesterday, 12 April 2018, in the early morning hours, extremist Israeli settlers once again attacked a mosque, this time in the village of Aqraba, north of Nablus, setting it on fire and vandalizing the mosque's walls with the words "death" and "price tag", clearly aiming to further terrorize the Palestinian population.

That Israel has grown so addicted to and brazen in its violation of international law and the systematic commission of crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, is undoubtedly a result of the decades-long impunity that continues to be granted by the international community. This cannot continue. The lives and fate of the defenceless Palestinian people suffering under this illegal occupation are dependent on an end to this impunity and injustice.

We thus reiterate our demands for international action, particularly by the Security Council, to ensure accountability for and a cessation of the violations being committed by the occupying Power. Israeli officials who have ordered unlawful lethal force must be prosecuted as a matter of universal jurisdiction or in international judicial forums. Furthermore, the international community must uphold its legal obligation to ensure the protection of civilians, for this obligation has not only been abdicated by Israel, the occupying Power, but is being intentionally and systematically breached as it continues its military attacks against civilians in Occupied Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. A lack of serious action by the international community to address this crisis and the continued violation of the law and denial of the Palestinian people's rights will only bolster Israel's impunity and allow for the further loss of innocent human life.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 630 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which

constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 April 2018 (A/ES-10/775-S/2018/329), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of those war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations

United Nations S/2018/366

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 April 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 18 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for 17 and 18 April 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 18 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (17 April 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: three in Ladhiqiyah, one in Aleppo and one in Homs.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire in Homs Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,785 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,519.8 tons.

Two United Nations humanitarian convoys were assured passage: one to Tall Shihab in Dar'a Governorate, comprising 23 refrigerated trucks with a total cargo weight of 149 tons, and one to Tayyibah in Dar'a Governorate, comprising 3 refrigerated trucks with a total cargo weight of 19 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 84 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 77,856 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,505.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (18 April 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: four in Ladhiqiyah, one in Damascus and one in Homs.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire: one in Dar'a Governorate and one in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Zira'ah, Aleppo Governorate. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.96 tons.

In total, 1,786 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,521.8 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 148 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 78,004 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, ceasefire agreements have been signed with Salim and Mazra'at Sulayman in Homs Governorate, and with Suwaysah in Qunaytirah Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,508.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/367

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 April 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 17 April 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instruction from my Government, I am writing to inform you that, pursuant to an investigation of a Houthi ballistic missile that was targeted at Saudi Arabia on 5 April 2018, it was discovered that the coordinates of the launch point of the aforementioned missile, N 16 51 11 E 43 38 57, were situated only 226 metres from humanitarian objects on the non-targeting lists of the Arab coalition forces to restore legitimacy in Yemen that belonged to the United Nations Children's Fund and a United Nations health facility.

The coalition condemns in the strongest terms the cowardly Houthi tactic of exploiting the presence of United Nations agencies in Yemen in order to use the offices and humanitarian workers of the United Nations as human shields to hide behind as they launch their indiscriminate terrorist ballistic missile attacks on densely populated civilian areas of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The lawless Houthi militias clearly aim to exploit the coalition's adherence to international humanitarian law through shielding their operations within internationally protected humanitarian offices. The coalition reiterates yet again the risks associated with maintaining United Nations offices in areas under Houthi militia control and so close to areas witnessing active combat and Houthi military activity. The coalition also reiterates the importance of reassessing the locations of the United Nations offices in Yemen, as well as the importance of relocating those offices to liberated areas under the legitimate Government's control. In addition, the coalition notes with great regret that the aforementioned United Nations agencies whose offices were exploited by the Houthis did not issue any condemnations of the recurrent Houthi ballistic missiles targeting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, even though those missiles were launched so close to their premises.

Furthermore, and with reference to the letter dated 12 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2018/335), the coalition reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of Houthi pressure tactics employed against United Nations staff members posted in Yemen. The letter detailed Houthi pressure tactics referenced in the letter from the United Nations Staff Union in Yemen to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, dated 5 March 2018. The tactics include limiting the United Nations international staff's stay in Sana'a to only three months, thus forcing United Nations agencies to rely fully on local staff, who are intimidated, threatened and detained by Houthis, who enforce their goal of controlling the work of the offices and specialized

Please recycle

agencies of the United Nations in Yemen. In the Staff Union letter, reference is made to cases of national staff being subjected to kidnappings, arbitrary abduction and detention in Sana'a, Ibb and Hudaydah, all areas currently controlled by the Houthis. Reference is also made in the letter to many cases of staff members being threatened and intimidated by the Houthi militias.

The Staff Union's outright warning that the Houthis seek to control United Nations operations through direct intimidation and threats to national colleagues confirms the coalition's worst fears and necessitates immediate action in order to guarantee the safety and security of all humanitarian workers and to prevent the lawless Houthis from subverting the work of intergovernmental organizations in order to serve their illegitimate purposes.

In closing, the coalition reiterates the importance of commencing immediate consultations with the legitimate Government of Yemen regarding the relocation of all offices and agencies of the United Nations to liberated areas controlled by the legitimate Government of Yemen in order to ensure that the offices continue to serve all Yemeni citizens in all the governorates of the Republic of Yemen, in accordance with the independence, impartiality and integrity of the United Nations, while ensuring the safety and security of international and local United Nations staff working in Yemen.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Khaled **Almanzlawiy**
Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

United Nations S/2018/368

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 April 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 18 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Contrary to the misinformation campaigns that have been waged over the past few days, the Syrian Government has done everything it can to help the civilians who left eastern Ghutah after the Syrian Arab Army and its allies succeeded in liberating them from armed terrorist groups, which had been besieging them from within and using them as human shields. It has done so because it has a responsibility to provide all forms of humanitarian assistance to Syrians affected by the crisis, wherever they may be in Syrian territory. The Syrian Government, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and its partners, have opened 15 shelters for the civilians who left eastern Ghutah. At those shelters, civilians are provided with all the food they need; electricity and water; medical services, including clinics, doctors, nurses and ambulances; and school supplies. A total of 89,461 civilians came to those shelters, but many of them have left. As at 5 April 2018, some 45,828 civilians, that is to say 34 per cent of the initial influx, continue to reside in the shelters.

Some 10 civil associations and actors, as well as chambers of industry and commerce, have contributed to this emergency response by providing all types of assistance. Meanwhile, the High Relief Committee provided the required facilitation to international organizations, which in turn provided food and health assistance, and clothing to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The Syrian Government is now opening the door wide to the United Nations and its Member States to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance and any other resources that those civilians may need to overcome their hardships and return to their homes in eastern Ghutah as soon as possible.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-06553 (E) 250418 260418

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United Nations S/2018/369

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 April 2018

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fiftieth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017) and paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system[1] and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for March 2018.

[1] Input provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mine Action Service, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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II. Major developments

Box 1

Key points: March 2018

1. Since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2401 (2018) on 24 February, in which the Council demanded a cessation of hostilities, military operations, in particular in eastern Ghutah, have reportedly claimed many hundreds of civilian lives. Thousands more civilians have reportedly been injured. There was only limited humanitarian access across conflict lines in March. Military developments in eastern Ghutah continued to result in civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure as government forces gradually advanced into the area, dividing the enclave into three separate areas. Non-State armed opposition groups continued artillery shelling of areas in Damascus city, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure. Some 133,000 people left the besieged enclave of eastern Ghutah, either through established corridors to sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq or through evacuation agreements to Idlib and Aleppo Governorates.

2. In north-western parts of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Turkish armed forces and non-State armed opposition groups entered the main city of Afrin and most other areas in the district. Since 20 January, military confrontations in the Afrin district of Aleppo Governorate have reportedly displaced over 137,000 people to the Tall Rif'at area, Nubl, Zahra', Fafin and surrounding villages. The lack of freedom of movement of internally displaced persons was a major concern, as they were prevented by local authorities from seeking safety and medical services in Aleppo city and from returning to Afrin district in some cases.

3. In Idlib Governorate, fighting between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, as well as among non-State armed opposition groups, continued to be reported. The humanitarian situation for those displaced in Idlib was extremely dire, as an additional 50,000 displaced persons recently arrived in the area from eastern Ghutah and Qadam, further stretching the capacity of host communities and humanitarian workers to respond. It is estimated that there are roughly 1.2 million internally displaced persons in Idlib Governorate, representing an increase of 25 per cent compared with figures from mid-2017.

4. An estimated 98,200 people had returned to Raqqah city as at 29 March. On 21 and 22 March, the United Nations conducted a security assessment of Raqqah city, noting the persistence of considerable risks despite relative calm and stability. The security assessment mission concluded that a humanitarian assessment mission could deploy (in early April), notwithstanding the widespread presence of explosive hazards, including unexploded ordnance, landmines and improvised explosive devices, throughout the city.

5. United Nations humanitarian assistance reached millions of people in need, including 2,159,965 people who received food assistance through regular deliveries. Access to hard-to-reach and besieged areas remained challenging, with only five inter-agency convoys reaching besieged and hard-to-reach locations during the month.

3. Since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2401 (2018) on 24 February, in which the Council demanded a cessation of hostilities, military operations, in particular in eastern Ghutah, have reportedly claimed many hundreds

of civilian lives. Thousands more civilians have reportedly been injured. Attacks on critical civilian infrastructure continue to be reported; there were more than 70 verified incidents since the beginning of 2018, including 28 since mid-February. Attacks on areas of Damascus also continued from eastern Ghutah, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure. There was only limited humanitarian access across conflict lines in March.

4. My Special Envoy for Syria was active throughout March to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018).

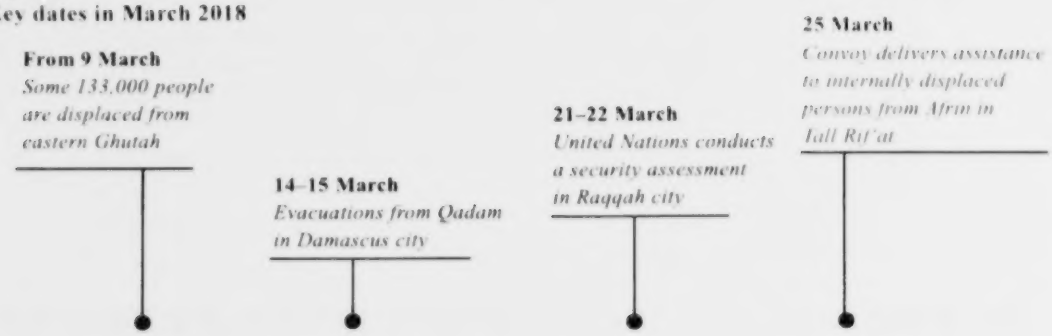
5. Negotiations between parties to the conflict in eastern Ghutah continued as the military operations escalated on the ground. Government and pro-government forces continued air and ground operations in the eastern Ghutah de-escalation area. An attack on 7 March on Hammurah and Saqba towns reportedly caused respiratory problems and suffocation among some 120 people, most of them women and children. Government forces gradually advanced into eastern Ghutah, cutting the area into three pockets.

6. Following agreements between parties to the conflict, some 130,000 internally displaced persons left the besieged enclave of eastern Ghutah in March, either through established corridors to sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq or through evacuation agreements to Idlib and Aleppo Governorates. This number includes a total of 83,288 people who left eastern Ghutah towards the sites in Rif Dimashq. While many people subsequently left those sites, 44,747 individuals remained, in facilities with the collective capacity to accommodate 25,855 people only. In addition, 48,216 individuals, mostly civilians and some fighters, left eastern Ghutah towards Idlib and Aleppo Governorates in negotiated evacuations. There were also exchanges of bodies and the release of Syrian prisoners held by armed groups. By the end of March, government forces and their allies were on the verge of gaining control over eastern Ghutah in its entirety, with negotiations in Duma ongoing.

7. The United Nations and its partners, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, provided food, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, protection and health support to people remaining inside areas of eastern Ghutah that have recently come under government control, such as Kafr Batna, Saqba and Hamuriyah. An estimated 50,000 people are believed to remain in those areas and to be in need of basic assistance and services. Despite the scaling up of the humanitarian response, the situation in the eight sites hosting internally displaced persons remains difficult, as most sites are overcrowded, with nearly twice as many people in the facilities as their intended capacity permits. Protection risks stemming from overcrowding and a lack of privacy remain prevalent, and there is a need for additional sanitation and hygiene facilities. The most recent inter-agency convoy to a besieged area was completed on 15 March, providing food for 26,100 people in Duma in eastern Ghutah.

8. Following a local agreement in the neighbourhood of Qadam in Damascus city, 1,351 people were evacuated to Idlib Governorate on 14 and 15 March. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) moved into the district following the departure of non-State armed opposition groups, resulting in clashes with Syrian authorities and non-State armed opposition groups. The United Nations was not a party to the negotiations, nor was it involved in the organization of the evacuation.

Figure I
Key dates in March 2018


From 9 March
Some 133,000 people are displaced from eastern Ghutah
14–15 March
Evacuations from Qadam in Damascus city
21–22 March
United Nations conducts a security assessment in Raqqah city
25 March
Convoy delivers assistance to internally displaced persons from Afrin in Tall Rif'at

9. Turkish forces, along with Syrian non-State armed opposition groups affiliated with Operation Euphrates Shield, continued Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, in Aleppo Governorate. On 20 January, the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in New York indicated that Turkey had "initiated a military operation on 20 January 2018 ... aimed at ensuring [the country's] border security [and] neutralizing terrorists in Afrin" (see S/2018/53). On 18 March, Turkey reported that its forces had entered Afrin. There were also separate clashes between Turkish forces and allied non-State armed opposition groups with pro-Syrian government forces. There have been reports of civilian deaths, injuries and displacement. Military confrontations in Afrin district since 20 January have reportedly displaced over 137,000 people to the Tall Rif'at area, Nubl, Zahra', Afrin and surrounding villages. The need for humanitarian assistance among the displaced population is high, with the majority relying on it to meet their basic needs. Since 29 January, reports have indicated that the Turkish Red Crescent and other Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have provided humanitarian aid to 220,000 people in need in 133 different locations in Afrin district. The lack of freedom of movement for internally displaced persons is a major concern, as many are not permitted to proceed to Aleppo city, where there is greater capacity for the humanitarian community to provide assistance such as shelter. There are also reports of displaced persons being prevented from returning to Afrin, despite some of them expressing their willingness to go back if the conditions are conducive. There is particular concern for the sick and injured among the displaced population, as the only available hospital, in Zahra', lacks the capacity to address all medical needs as it has only 12 beds. A mechanism has been put in place for the medical evacuation of emergency cases to Aleppo city; however, it can take up to 15 days to obtain the approval of the Syrian authorities for medical evacuations of critical patients. On 28 March, 60 medical cases were evacuated to Aleppo city following a prolonged waiting period. On 1 March, humanitarian partners delivered cross-line humanitarian assistance from Aleppo to Afrin. On 25 March, a United Nations/Syrian Arab Red Crescent inter-agency convoy delivered food, non-food items and nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene items sufficient for 50,000 people in need in Tall Rif'at. A cross-border shipment to Afrin from Turkey planned for early April was also being prepared in cooperation with the Turkish authorities.

10. Fighting continued in Idlib Governorate between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, including air strikes and artillery shelling. Shelling on the towns of Fu'ah and Kafraya, besieged by non-State armed opposition groups, was also reported. Clashes between non-State armed opposition groups were also reported. The Syrian Liberation Front, a group formed from the Ahrar al-Sham and Nour al-Din al-Zanki groups, launched an offensive on Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (the Levant Liberation Organization) across Idlib Governorate and the western part

of Aleppo Governorate, which responded through counter-attacks, both of which led to casualties.

11. The humanitarian situation for those displaced in Idlib is extremely dire, with almost 400,000 people displaced owing to fighting that has taken place since December 2017. Camps for internally displaced persons continue to operate at up to 400 per cent of capacity. While around 168,000 of those previously displaced have now returned to their original subdistricts, the capacity to respond remains severely overstretched, as an additional 50,000 displaced people have recently arrived in the area from eastern Ghutah and Qadam.

12. The south-western part of the country also saw renewed violence, including government air strikes and artillery shelling, as well as repeated clashes between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups in Dar'a Governorate. Reports that both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups had reinforced their positions with additional equipment and personnel were received by the United Nations. Meanwhile, government sources reported on local agreements being reached in multiple villages and towns in the area.

13. An estimated 98,200 people had returned to Raqqah city as at 29 March. While public services are slowly returning, with bakeries having reopened, the city lacks electricity and mobile communications; water is only pumped at a very limited capacity to the outskirts of the city. There are currently three functional health-care facilities inside Raqqah city. On 21 and 22 March, the United Nations conducted a security assessment of Raqqah city, noting the persistence of considerable risks despite relative calm and stability. The widespread presence of explosive hazards, including unexploded ordnance, landmines and improvised explosive devices, throughout the city has continued to pose a significant risk to civilians as well as to humanitarian workers. Health actors are continuing to see an average of more than 200 blast-related civilian injuries and deaths per month. The systematic survey, marking and subsequent removal of explosive hazards is a precondition for the safe return of civilians, as well as the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The United Nations security assessment mission concluded that a humanitarian assessment mission could deploy (in early April).

14. Fighting against ISIL continued. ISIL continued to retain a presence east of Dayr al-Zawr city (around the towns of Albu Kamal and Mayadin), in Hasakah Governorate, and in the Damascus suburb of Yarmouk. ISIL also expanded its control over parts of the nearby Qadam neighbourhood of Damascus and negotiated an exchange of prisoners and deceased fighters with government forces.

15. The Department of Defense of the United States of America publicly reported that, in March, the coalition led by the United States had carried out at least 32 strikes against ISIL targets: 30 reported in the Governorate of Dayr al-Zawr and 2 reported in the Governorate of Hasakah.

16. On 4 March, the Ministry of Defence publicly reported that, in response to shelling with mortars on residential areas and military positions in Damascus and Rif Dimashq, the Syrian Arab Army had taken over several areas in the previous 48 hours, including Utaya, Hawsh al-Salihiyah, Hawsh Kharabu, Nashabiyah, Hazrama and Bayt Nayim farms. The Ministry then stated on 16 March that the Syrian Arab Army had taken over a large number of cities in eastern Ghutah, including Nashabiyah, Salihiyah, Bayt Nayim, Muhammadiyah, Hawsh al-Ash'ari, Shaffuniyah, Bayt Siwa, Hamuriyah, Mudayra and Misraba.

Protection

17. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and to damage and destroy civilian infrastructure. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians, destroying and damaging vital infrastructure and leaving communities littered with explosive hazards that killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas added to the complexity of the explosive hazard threat. The many civilian casualties and the scale of civilian destruction remain a strong indication that violations of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and of the prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks, are continuing. Children are particularly affected. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2017 was the deadliest year for children in the country since the beginning of the conflict.

18. Fighting continued to have an impact on civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), civilian casualties occurred in various governorates, in possible violation of international humanitarian law (see annex). OHCHR has documented alleged incidents perpetrated by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

19. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government provided OHCHR with information on alleged violations. The United Nations cannot independently verify these allegations. In a note verbale received on 8 March, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic in Geneva detailed "lists of shelling with mortars and missile attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 3rd, 4th and 5th of March 2018, which amounted to 99 mortars and their locations". It stated that "those terrorist attacks resulted in two civilian deaths and five injured civilians, most of them children and women, as well as in physical damages to private and public property and infrastructures". In addition, on 9 March, the Permanent Mission sent a note verbale to OHCHR in which it detailed "lists of shelling with mortars and missile attacks, perpetrated by terrorist groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city ... on 6–7 March, which amounted to 61 mortars ... killing three civilians and injuring a further 28, most of them women and children, and damaging private and public property and infrastructure". In a subsequent note verbale dated 19 March, the Permanent Mission detailed "lists of shelling with mortars and missile attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city ..., during the period from 13th to 17th of March 2018, which amounted to 86 mortars ... resulting in four civilian deaths and 89 injured civilians most of them children and women, as well as physical damages to private and public property and infrastructures".

20. Notwithstanding the call upon the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22 to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remains limited, given that the Government has not granted it access to the country.

21. The United Nations and its health partners verified eight attacks, including air strikes, that affected health-care facilities and personnel in March, some of which repeatedly targeted the same facilities. On 3 March, the Ibn Sina psychiatric hospital in Rif Dimashq (Duma) was hit by two mortars, causing material damage. On the same day, the Albairouni hospital, a public cancer-specialized hospital in Rif Dimashq (Harasta), was hit with a number of mortars, causing one injury and material damage.

On 5 March, Tishrin Military Hospital in Rif Dimashq was affected by indirect artillery fire, causing two injuries, and the Ibn Sina psychiatric hospital in Rif Dimashq (Duma) was hit again with a missile shell, causing injury to a hospital staff member and material damage. On 6 March, Tishrin Military Hospital in Rif Dimashq was again affected by indirect artillery fire, causing two injuries. On 8 March, the Albairouni hospital in Rif Dimashq (Harasta) was hit by three mortar shells, causing one injury. It was hit again on 9 March by indirect artillery fire, causing material damage. On 18 March, the Ibn Sina psychiatric hospital in Rif Dimashq (Duma) was once more hit by a mortar, causing one fatality (hospital staff) and material damage. On 20 March, the Irbin hospital in eastern Ghutah, which had previously been deconflicted by the Co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, suffered an attack that killed one patient and resulted in structural damage to the hospital.

22. Educational facilities also continued to suffer the impact of the fighting, with the United Nations verifying three attacks affecting schools and children. On 5 March, in Taftanaz, in Idlib Governorate, shelling occurred near the main gate of the Muhaudin school. The school had already sent the children home following earlier shelling on the main market that morning. While leaving the school, more than 20 people were injured, including more than 10 children and school staff. The school building suffered minor damage. On 11 March, in Idlib city, the Department of Examinations of the Education Directorate was hit by air strikes, resulting in severe damage to the building and equipment. On 21 March, in Kafr Battikh, in Idlib Governorate, a school was hit by air strikes, killing 13 schoolchildren aged between 7 and 11 years.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points

1. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Regular programming reached more than 2.1 million people with food assistance through 2,162 deliveries.

2. Five United Nations inter-agency convoys delivered multisectoral assistance to 162,100 people in one besieged location and three hard-to-reach locations.

3. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017), remains a vital part of the humanitarian response. In March, 466 trucks (27 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance to more than 1 million people through cross-border deliveries. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey and monitored the loading and passage of the first relief consignment through the Ya'rubiyah crossing on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

23. Seven years into the Syrian crisis, the scale of humanitarian needs in the country remains staggering. In the 2018 humanitarian needs overview, 13.1 million people were identified as being in need of humanitarian assistance, including 5.6 million people in acute need. Some 6.1 million people were internally displaced as at the end of 2017, including 2.9 million displaced during the previous 12 months. Close to 5.5 million registered Syrian refugees remain displaced in a region facing deepening economic, social and development challenges. Less than half of the country's health facilities are operational and more than a third of households rely on unsafe water sources. One in three schools have been damaged or destroyed. An estimated 6.5 million people are facing severe food insecurity. In addition, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need remained extremely challenging in many

areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines, administrative impediments and deliberate restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict. In particular, access by the United Nations and its partners to people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remained a critical concern. Bureaucratic impediments, such as the non-issuance of facilitation letters by the Government, remained a significant factor in delays or non-deliveries, the creation of a tripartite coordination mechanism to tackle such problems notwithstanding. The most recent meeting of the mechanism was held on 12 December 2017, at which time there was no breakthrough on access-related issues.

24. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for March and April, access was requested to 27 locations in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, with the objective of reaching 1,027,220 people. Convoys are prepared for areas with multisectoral needs where access is limited, to ensure that United Nations support is based on needs. Five inter-agency convoys were able to deploy to hard-to-reach and besieged locations, namely, to besieged Duma in eastern Ghutah, Dar al-Kabirah in Homs Governorate and Tall Rif'at in Aleppo Governorate (see table 1). The second convoy to Duma, which was completed on 9 March, delivered the remaining food assistance, along with some health and nutrition items that could not be offloaded from the previous convoy on 5 March owing to insecurity. The total number of people reached in March was 162,100.

Table 1
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, March 2018

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*Number of beneficiaries reached*	*Type of assistance*
4 March	Dar al-Kabirah, Ghantu, Tayr Ma'lah	40 250	33 500	Multisectoral
5 March	Duma	90 000	15 500	Multisectoral
9 March	Duma	90 000	12 000	Multisectoral
15 March	Duma	90 000	26 100	Food
25 March	Tall Rif'at	50 000	75 000	Multisectoral

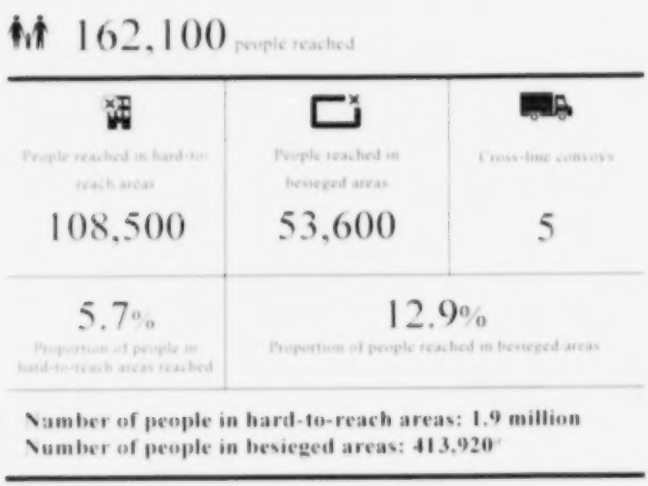
25. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations across the country. Such deliveries are undertaken in areas in which access is less challenging through regular programming. In March, the World Food Programme (WFP) submitted 2,162 official requests to the Syrian authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations across the country, all of which were approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted 57 requests for facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, all of which were approved.

Figure II

Percentage of people reached each month in besieged areas through United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, October 2017–March 2018

26. United Nations partners continued to face response challenges in north-eastern parts of the country, owing to, among other things, administrative restrictions, pending security approvals for access to restricted areas and high levels of explosive hazard contamination. Following the suspension of NGO activities in January 2018 owing to restrictions by national and local authorities, which affected 25 national NGOs, an agreement was reached on 31 January to allow for the resumption of United Nations regular programming in the north-east and for some humanitarian partners to resume their work. This agreement was valid only for two months, however (to 31 March), and covers a limited number of partners. It is critical that all humanitarian partners be permitted to continue to provide much-needed assistance to affected people in sites for internally displaced persons and host communities without restrictions, including to deter push factors compelling the displaced to return in the absence of safe and sustainable conditions. The United Nations continued to engage with the local administration and the Governor of Hasakah to identify a long-term solution to national NGO registration issues and enable the full, unhindered resumption of humanitarian activities in the north-east.

Figure III
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, March 2018



[a] Figures are currently subject to review following recent developments in eastern Ghutah in Rif Dimashq Governorate.

27. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for 132,575 treatments were rejected or removed from inter-agency convoys by the Syrian authorities, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Details regarding the treatments and supplies removed are shown in table 2. Additional medical supplies were scheduled to be delivered as part of the inter-agency convoy plan; however, only five inter-agency convoys were able to proceed in March.

Table 2
Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys, March 2018

Location	*Number of treatments*	*Types of supplies*
Duma	124 010	Isosorbide dinitrate 20 mg tablet, ipratropium bromide inhalation aerosol 20 mcg/metered dose, beclomethasone dipropionate inhaler 50 mcg/puff, beclomethasone dipropionate nasal spray 50 mcg/puff, 200 doses, benzyl benzoate 25 g/100 ml bottle, cephalexin (monohydrate) USP 250 mg/5 ml suspension by Medico, paracetamol injection 10 mg/ml, 100 ml vial, insulin syringe U-100 luer with needle G29X 0.5", pneumonia type A kit (P97-023), pneumonia type B kit (P97-023), Italian emergency kits "Kit B" supply, inter-agency emergency health kit 2015 supplementary unit renewable supplies, digoxin 0.5 mg/2 ml ampoule, lidocaine hydrochloride 10 mg/ml in 5 ml ampoule, heparin sodium 5,000 IU/ml in 1 ml ampoule, diclofenac sodium 75 mg/3 ml ampoule, adrenaline (epinephrine) 1 mg in 1 ml ampoule, burn dressing kit without silver sulphadiazine cream, ceftriaxone sodium 500 mg vial, by Ibn Hayyan/Syria, ceftriaxone sodium 1,000 mg vial, by Ibn Hayyan/Syria, metronidazole 500 mg/100 ml vial, cefuroxime (as axetil) USP 500 mg tablet, mixed serum (dextrose 5% + sodium chloride 0.9%) 1,000 ml (equivalent to Na + 30 mmol/l, Cl - 30 mmol/l), IV administration set, sterile, disposable
Dar al-Kabirah, Ghantu, Tayr Ma'lah	8 565	Carbamazepine BP 100 mg tablet, carbamazepine 100 mg tablets in blisters, pneumonia type B kit (P97-023), infusion giving set, sterile, with air inlet and needle

Humanitarian response

28. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners reached millions of people in need through all available access modalities, including regular programming from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines; cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided to those in need from Jordan and Turkey (see table 3). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services where possible.

Table 3
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, March 2018

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	
International Organization for Migration	28 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 927 000
United Nations Children's Fund	4 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	3 103 000
United Nations Population Fund	332 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	78 000
World Food Programme	5 028 000
World Health Organization	1 675 000

29. The conflict has dramatically deepened for hundreds of thousands of people in Rif Dimashq. The military offensive on eastern Ghutah has created extreme conditions in an enclave certain parts of which have been besieged since 2013. Some 133,000 people were displaced from eastern Ghutah in March, more than 44,000 of whom remain in severely overcrowded sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq. Close to 50,000 others — mostly civilians and some fighters — have been transported to Idlib and Aleppo, where the humanitarian response has already been stretched to breaking point. The remainder have left the sites for internally displaced persons under a sponsorship system, the details of which remain unclear to the United Nations. Very severe needs, including protection needs, persist within eastern Ghutah in view of the level of destruction and the lack of services. The United Nations and its partners are responding to the mounting humanitarian needs of those in sites for internally displaced persons with food, shelter, health and other assistance and protection services. Additionally, the United Nations has provided legal counselling to around 22,000 individuals and more than 225,000 core relief items, as well as shelter support, including the provision to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent of 2,200 shelter kits. Some assistance has also been provided in newly accessible areas in eastern Ghutah through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent; Duma remained besieged and attacks continued.

30. Cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure IV). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian

authorities in advance of each shipment, including of its content, destination and number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

31. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations authorized under resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017) in Jordan and Turkey and monitored the loading and passage of the first relief consignment through the Ya'rubiyah border crossing from Iraq. During the reporting period, the Mechanism monitored seven United Nations agencies crossing 27 consignments consisting of 466 trucks from the four border crossings: 10 from Bab al-Hawa (256 trucks), 8 from Bab al-Salam (79 trucks), 8 from Ramtha (122 trucks) and 1 from Ya'rubiyah (9 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the consignments sent. The United Nations provides 48-hour notice to the Government for all shipments. Once in the country, United Nations partners ensure that shipments arrive at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensure independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and monitor the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

32. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 775 cross-border consignments, with more than 19,590 trucks (13,293 by way of Bab al-Hawa and 2,020 by way of Bab al-Salam from Turkey; 4,268 by way of Ramtha from Jordan; and 9 by way of Ya'rubiyah from Iraq). These operations complement the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

33. The United Nations and its implementing partners delivered humanitarian assistance from four cross-border entry points through Iraq, Turkey and Jordan (see table 4). This included food assistance to more than 706,000 people. Moreover, the United Nations conducted health and medical deliveries, providing more than 1.4 million treatments through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF delivered winter kits, child protection assistance, nutrition, education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies through a number of cross-border shipments. More than 163,000 people were reached with safe and adequate quantities of water through urgent repair/maintenance and operation of water systems in communities hosting internally displaced persons and returnees. Around 18 million litres of safe water were provided by truck to affected populations in Idlib and displaced populations from eastern Ghutah. Additionally, 38,000 people were provided with access to sanitation facilities through latrine construction. Moreover, some 140,000 primary health-care outpatient consultations were provided. UNICEF partners continued to provide life-saving nutrition services; 18,000 children and 19,000 women were screened for acute malnutrition using mid-upper arm circumference indicators. Furthermore, 9,400 caregivers, including pregnant and lactating women, were counselled on appropriate infant and young child feeding. In addition, through holistic support to schools and learning centres, UNICEF enabled 12,500 children to gain access to formal education and some 2,200 children to non-formal education. Support included stipends for teachers and education personnel, support for school running costs and the improvement or repair of education facilities, including gender/disability water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Around 445 teachers and education personnel benefited from professional capacity-building.

34. Moreover, a nationwide immunization round to administer bivalent oral polio vaccine was conducted in 13 governorates from 11 to 15 March. The final number of children vaccinated was 2,675,303 out of a target of 2.79 million children. A campaign for the use of oral polio vaccine was also conducted in Dara Governorate, with 162,053 children vaccinated against a target of 140,061 children. Those reported

successes notwithstanding, pockets of underimmunization persist. In the final week of March, nine new suspected measles cases were detected. Follow-up testing for laboratory confirmation and case investigation are ongoing.

35. UNHCR and its partners continued to enhance the response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and other crisis-affected populations. In March, 8,089 protection interventions were conducted, reaching 135,831 beneficiaries, including 73,356 individuals through general protection activities, 2,673 through child protection activities and 22,226 through more than 1,000 awareness-raising campaigns on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response activities across 12 governorates. As at the end of March, the total number of functioning UNHCR-funded community centres and mobile units stood at 93 community centres, 16 satellite centres and 74 mobile units; these were supported by 2,110 outreach volunteers, providing protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and livelihoods services and services for persons with specific needs, to the benefit of some 2.6 million internally displaced persons, returnees, host communities and other crisis-affected people, in a vast catchment area encompassing 12 governorates. During the reporting period, 41,172 people in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Suwayda', Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Hasakah Governorates were direct beneficiaries of the United Nations legal assistance programme, including through counselling, sessions to raise awareness on various legal topics mainly relating to civil documentation and women's rights and the direct intervention of lawyers before courts and administrative bodies. Moreover, the United Nations Population Fund reached 352,259 people with activities on reproductive health and on sexual and gender-based violence.

Figure IV

Number of beneficiaries targeted by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, March 2018

(Thousands)

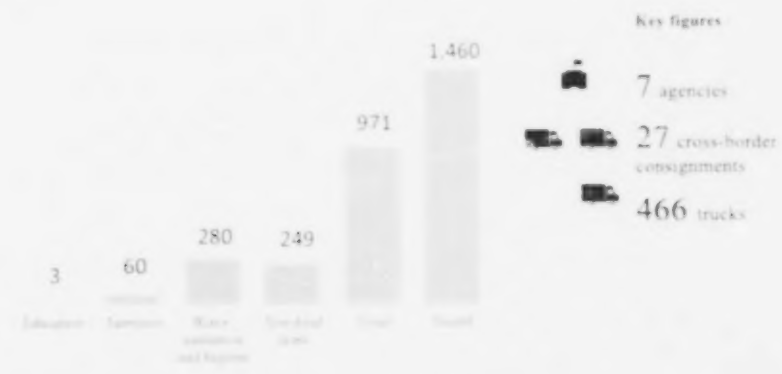


Table 4
Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, March 2018

Governorate	*District*	*Education*	*Food*	*Health*	*Non-food items*	*Nutrition*	*Water, sanitation and hygiene*
Aleppo	Bab	1 600		16 445	12 500	–	12 500
Aleppo	I'zaz	1 600	130 710	267 198	25 500	–	32 598
Aleppo	Jarablus	–	–	3 750	–	–	–
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	–	142 020	–	–	–
Hasakah	Hasakah	–	16 000	–	–	–	–
Hasakah	Malikiyah	–	–	22 860	12 000	–	–
Hasakah	Qamishli	–	–	40 600	–	–	–
Raqqah	Raqqah	–	–	600	–	–	–
Raqqah	Tall Abyad	–	–	–	2 400	–	30 000
Suwayda	Suwayda'	–	1 455	–	–	–	–
Dar'a	Sanamayn	–	17 555	–	–	–	–
Dar'a	Dar'a	–	128 848	15 000	–	–	–
Dar'a	Izra'	–	58 811	20 800	–	–	–
Dayr al-Zawr	Dayr al-Zawr	–	–	2 000	–	–	–
Hama	Muhradah	–	1 500	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	97 750	120 220	7 098	–	2 500
Idlib	Ariha	–	103 650	38 890	59 272	–	–
Idlib	Harim	–	284 970	500 850	90 773	60 483	196 963
Idlib	Idlib	–	80 250	169 590	14 908	–	1 000
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	30 600	69 610	8 457	–	–
Qunaytirah	Fiq	–	100	–	–	–	–
Qunaytirah	Qunaytirah	–	26 900	30 000	–	–	–

36. The Russian Federation sent information bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

37. A total of 64 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in March. Of those, 15 were approved, 46 remain pending and 3 were rejected. Of the 29 new visa applications submitted in January and February 2018, 16 were approved in March, while 9 remain pending and 4 were rejected. A total of 87 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in March, of which 54 were approved and 33 remain pending. An additional 27 requests for visa renewals submitted in February were approved in March. For some United Nations entities in the Syrian Arab Republic, a significant number of staff are not in place or cannot be replaced owing to the non-issuance of visas for months, formal requests notwithstanding.

38. On 25 March, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syrian Arab Republic submitted a request to the Syrian authorities for the approval of the deployment of an inter-agency surge team to scale up the operational capacity of the United Nations in the country. The request is for 17 additional United Nations staff

(from UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, WHO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) to be deployed for a four-week period. Visa requests were submitted on 27 and 28 March. Feedback from the Syrian authorities was pending as at the end of March.

39. A total of 23 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

40. Programmes of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system are implemented in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, air strikes, regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetric attacks. In addition, and as a result of activities relating to the armed conflict, some areas of operation are highly contaminated with explosive hazards that pose an elevated risk to the implementation of United Nations activities in those areas.

41. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations or agencies of the United Nations system, of whom 18 were staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 66 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are also reported to have been killed.

42. A total of 24 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 23 UNRWA staff members) are detained or missing.

III. Observations

43. In March, military escalation continued across the Syrian Arab Republic, in violation of existing ceasefire agreements, Security Council resolution 2401 (2018) and previous Council resolutions. After 50 monthly reports and countless Security Council briefings, I continue to receive daily reports of attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. De-escalation areas have become combat zones and theatres of the most perilous kind. The suffering of civilians continues. I am particularly disturbed by the disregard for civilian life and reports of repeated attacks on schools and health facilities, as well as reports of the use of chemical weapons. The fighting has also resulted in hundreds of thousands of Syrians being displaced, many multiple times, further stretching the ability of the United Nations and its partners to adequately respond with humanitarian assistance. In this regard, I urge the parties to refrain from any action that might force civilians to flee their habitual residence. In Idlib Governorate alone, it is estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million internally displaced persons, representing a 25 per cent increase from one year ago. In eastern Ghutah, in a matter of just three weeks, more than 130,000 people have had to abandon homes.

44. In the light of those developments on the ground, I must once again remind parties to the conflict of their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, including when hostilities are aimed at Security Council-designated terrorist groups. Furthermore, I once again call upon all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize, the impact of hostilities on civilians and civilian objects and to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance conducted without any adverse

distinction and in full adherence to humanitarian principles. I also remind all States with any influence over the parties that they have the obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict. I will continue to offer the good offices of the United Nations, in the hope that warring parties choose peaceful means to resolve this conflict.

45. I reiterate that those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. Such a step is central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, all States, civil society and the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

46. For eight years, the people of the Syrian Arab Republic have endured suffering upon suffering. The need that the civilian population consistently rank as the most critical is the need for protection: protection from the violence that has killed hundreds of thousands and has destroyed civilian infrastructure. No military efforts will provide the protection they are asking for. There is no military solution to the conflict. The solution must be political. We must find ways to make credible progress towards a genuine and credible political solution that meet the aspirations of the Syrian people to dignity and freedom in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué. My Special Envoy continues to work towards that end. With regard to the establishment of the constitutional committee, he relies on the commitment of the Astana guarantors, who invited participants to Sochi, Russian Federation, that the constitutional committee should be formed under United Nations auspices, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015).

Annex

Incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 2018*

Damascus and Rif Dimashq Governorates

- On 1 March, air strikes hit a residential building in opposition-controlled Kafr Batna, which partially collapsed, reportedly killing three civilians, including a girl, and injuring at least seven other civilians.
- On 1 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit residential areas in opposition-held Duma, allegedly killing five civilians, including a woman and a girl.
- On 4 March, several ground-based strikes hit a residential area in government-held Jaramana, reportedly injuring four civilians, including a woman and a child.
- On 6 March, several ground-based strikes hit residential areas of Jaramana, including Hay al-Ba'th, Presidential Square and the Corniche, allegedly killing 3 civilians, including a woman and a girl, and injuring 12 other civilians, three of them women. One strike reportedly hit the vicinity of a school, killing a girl and injuring her mother.
- On 7 March, air strikes hit informal housing structures in Duma, reportedly killing nine civilians, including three women.
- On 7 March, two male civilians on a motorbike were allegedly hit by air strikes in opposition-controlled Hamuriyah, which killed the two men and burned their bodies and the vehicle.
- On 7 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit residential areas of opposition-held Saqba. An air strike caused the collapse of a building in the basement of which civilians were sheltered, reportedly killing 17 civilians, including five women and two boys.
- On 9 March, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Jaramana, allegedly killing a civilian woman and a child and injuring two other women and a child.
- On 10 March, air strikes hit residential areas of Duma, reportedly causing the collapse of two buildings and killing 17 civilians, including five women, three boys and three girls. Among those killed were eight civilians from a single family who were sheltered in one of the buildings.
- On 11 March, air strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Harasta, allegedly killing nine civilians, including two women, two boys and two girls.
- On 11 March, ground-based strikes reportedly hit a residential area in the Corniche area of Jaramana, reportedly killing 2 civilian women and injuring 10 other civilians, including two women.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of developments on the ground and the incidents that occurred during the month that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been able to corroborate relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Cessation of Hostilities of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

- On 11 March, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in Damascus, including Barzah, Shaghur, Bab Tuma and Maliki, allegedly killing three civilians, one of whom was a child, and injuring at least five other civilians, including two women.

- On 13 March, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in the Bab Sharqi and Zablatani neighbourhoods in the old town of Damascus, reportedly killing a civilian woman and injuring two other civilians.

- On 14 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit residential areas of Hamuriyah, allegedly killing 12 civilians, including five women, three boys and three girls. Among those killed were a family of five who had sheltered in one of the buildings that was struck and a civilian in the garden in front of his house. More than 20 civilians remained under the rubble as first responders were unable to operate owing to ongoing strikes in the area.

- On 15 March, a ground-based strike hit a residential area of Bab Tuma in Damascus, reportedly killing a civilian.

- On 16 March, air strikes hit the vicinity of a market square in which hundreds of civilians had gathered to move towards the Hamuriyah crossing point to be evacuated. At least 41 civilians, including women and children, were reportedly killed by the strikes, with dozens of other civilians injured. A number of internally displaced persons were among the victims and some bodies were burned and others scattered, rendering the identification of some victims difficult.

- On 17 March, air strikes hit a residential area in opposition-held Ayn Tarma, one of them hitting a building in the basement of which internally displaced persons were sheltered. The strikes caused the collapse of the building and allegedly killed 14 civilians, including seven boys, four girls and a woman.

- On 19 March, air strikes hit a residential area of Harasta. A strike damaged and triggered a fire in a residential building in the basement of which several civilians were sheltered. The strike reportedly killed two boys and two women and injured 15 other civilians. It also hit near a medical point but did not damage the facility.

- On 19 March, air strikes hit a school in opposition-controlled Irbin in which hundreds of civilians were reportedly sheltered, damaging the facility and triggering a fire. The strike allegedly killed 20 civilians, including 14 girls, two boys and four women, and injured at least 40 other civilians. Civilians remained in the shelter after the incident as they had nowhere else to go.

- On 20 March, a ground-based strike hit a shopping area in Kashkul, a residential neighbourhood in Jaramana, reportedly killing at least 21 civilians (including eight women, a boy and a girl) and injuring at least 8 other civilians (including four women and a boy). At the time of the incident, large numbers of people, including those displaced from Rif Dimashq and other governorates, were in the area ahead of the forthcoming Mother's Day holiday.

- On 22 March, an air strike hit a building in Irbin in which several dozen civilians (mainly families) were sheltered. The strike triggered a fire in the basement that reportedly killed 37 civilians and critically injured 9 others, who died the next day. In total, 46 civilians, including 15 women, eight boys and eight girls, were killed in the incident, including nine families.

- On 23 March, ground-based strikes hit a sporting facility in the Fayha' area of Damascus, allegedly killing a boy and injuring at least two other civilians.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 5 March, a ground-based strike hit a checkpoint reportedly manned by Asayish forces at the entrance to Barband village on the outskirts of Raju district in west Afrin. The strike hit in close proximity to a vehicle carrying civilians, allegedly killing an elderly woman and injuring 21 other civilians, including nine women and four children. The civilians were reportedly fleeing the fighting near their villages of Ashunah and Zarqah in Raju and were heading towards Afrin city.
- On 5 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit near a residential area of Qurayriyah village in Jindayris, south of Afrin, allegedly killing two civilians, including a three-month-old girl, and injuring eight others, including a woman and three children.
- On 7 March, ground-based strikes hit a residential area of Maydanki village in Sharan district, reportedly injuring five civilians, including two women.
- On 8 March, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Turandah village, allegedly killing three siblings: a girl and two boys.
- On 14 March, explosive hazards reportedly killed two male civilians and injured five others — three women and two children aged 12 and 13 — who were travelling by tractor from Afrin city to their home in Ma'batli district in Afrin. The explosive hazard reportedly detonated while they were driving along the road.
- On 14 March, several ground-based strikes hit residential areas of Ashrafiyah and Fillat Street in Afrin city, allegedly killing 5 civilians, including a seven-year-old girl, and injuring 17 other civilians, including five women and seven children.
- On 16 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit a residential area of the Mahmudiyah neighbourhood in Afrin city, reportedly killing at least 6 civilians, including one woman, and injuring 27 other civilians, including eight women and six children.
- On 17 March, ground-based strikes hit the vicinity of Afrin hospital in Afrin city, causing damage to the paediatric ward. Patients had been evacuated at least two days before to government-controlled Nubl and Zahra' villages.
- On 18 March, three civilians were reportedly killed and four others injured, all from one family, when an explosive hazard detonated as they tried to enter their home in Afrin city.
- On 19 March, an explosive hazard detonated in a commercial building in Afrin city, allegedly killing seven civilians and three opposition fighters in the vicinity.
- On 20 March, two male civilians were reportedly killed and seven others were injured, all from one family, when an explosive hazard detonated in their home in Barqum village in southern rural Aleppo.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 16 March, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters reportedly captured 18 civilian men in Sha'fah town in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate for unknown reasons. Their whereabouts remain unknown.
- On 21 March, a 13-year-old boy was allegedly killed by an explosive hazard that detonated near him in the street in ISIL-held Bahrah town in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

- On 22 March, a civilian woman was reportedly killed and a boy injured when an explosive hazard detonated in their home in government-held Quriyah town in eastern Dayr al-Zawr.

Raqqah Governorate

- On 14 March, a senior Kurdish official from the Raqqah Civil Council, who had been instrumental in its foundation in 2017, was allegedly shot dead in his home in Tall Abyad in northern Raqqah Governorate.
- On 16 March, a male civilian was reportedly killed when explosive hazards detonated near him as he was checking his home in the Dariyah neighbourhood of Raqqah city.
- On 22 March, the bodies of 22 civilians were retrieved from under the rubble of a destroyed building close to Al-Ma'arri School north of Raqqah city as a result of air strikes carried out on the area a few months previously.

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Letter dated 19 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith an information bulletin dated 19 April 2018 from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 19 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (19 April 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: three in Ladhiqiyah, one in Aleppo and one in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Ma'lula in Rif Dimashq Governorate: 445 food parcels containing tinned meat, sugar, tea and rice were distributed. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered was 1.9 tons.

In total, 1,787 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,523.66 tons.

Two United Nations humanitarian convoys were assured passage: one to Tall Shihab in Dar'a Governorate, comprising 23 refrigerated trucks with a total cargo weight of 149 tons, and one to Tayyibah in Dar'a Governorate, comprising 5 refrigerated trucks with a total cargo weight of 32 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 21 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 78,025 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,508.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.